

DECEMBER 1914

PRICE 15 CENTS

THE **RED BOOK** MAGAZINE

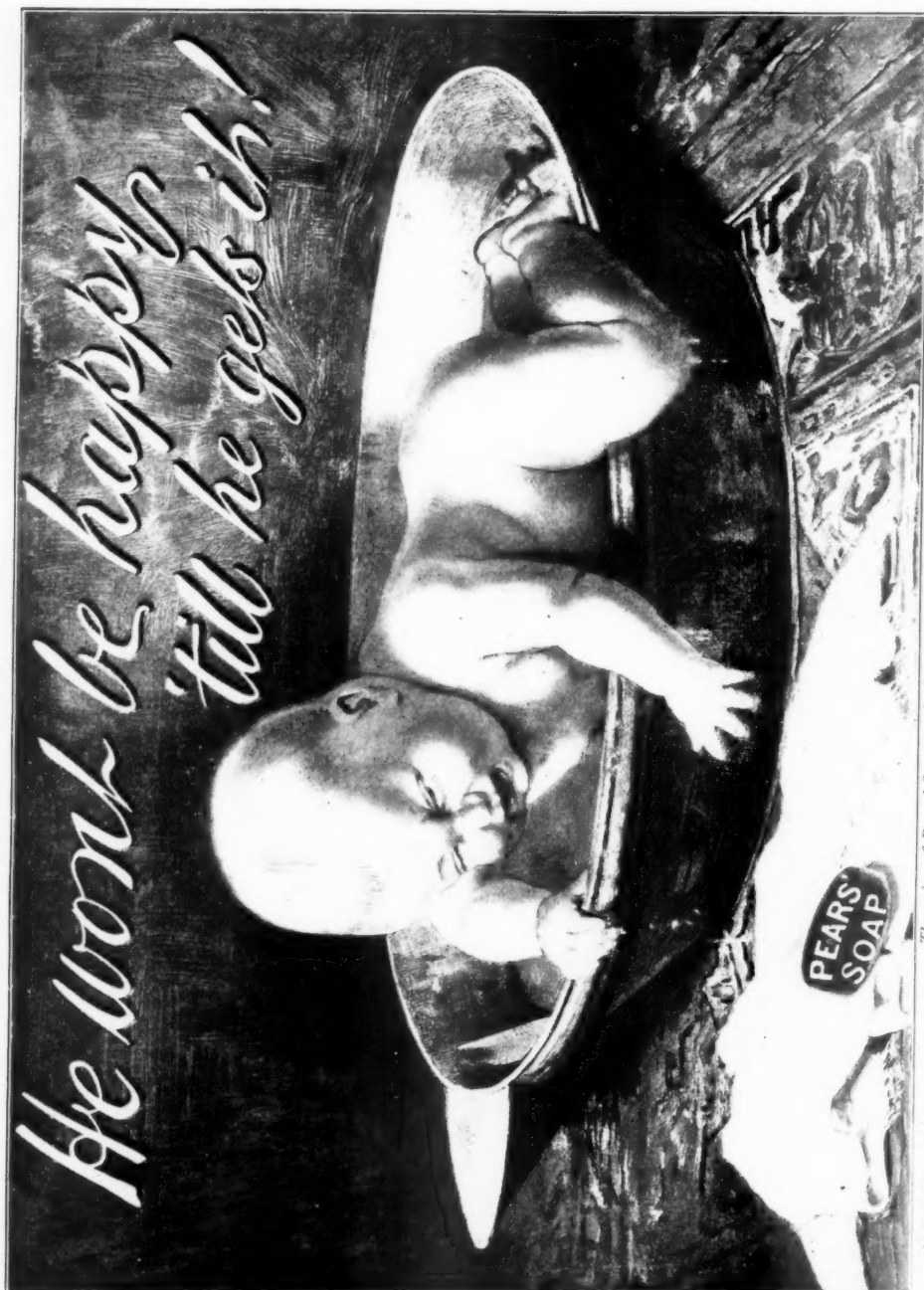
Meredith Nicholson
John Fleming Wilson
Cosmo Hamilton
Harris Merton Lyon
Albert Payson Terhune
Ellis Parker Butler
James Oliver Curwood

THE NEW WESTCOTT NOVEL
"HEPSEY BURKE"

and 8 other features
in this
issue

"Empty Pockets"
The new novel of New York
By **RUPERT HUGHES**

*He won't be happy
'till he gets it!*



PEARS' SOAP

The price of Pears' Soaps to dealers has not and will not be affected by the European War.

DECEMBER RED BOOK MAGAZINE

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PHOTOGRAPHIC ART STUDIES Beautiful Women of the Stage

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"Swift's Premium" Bacon

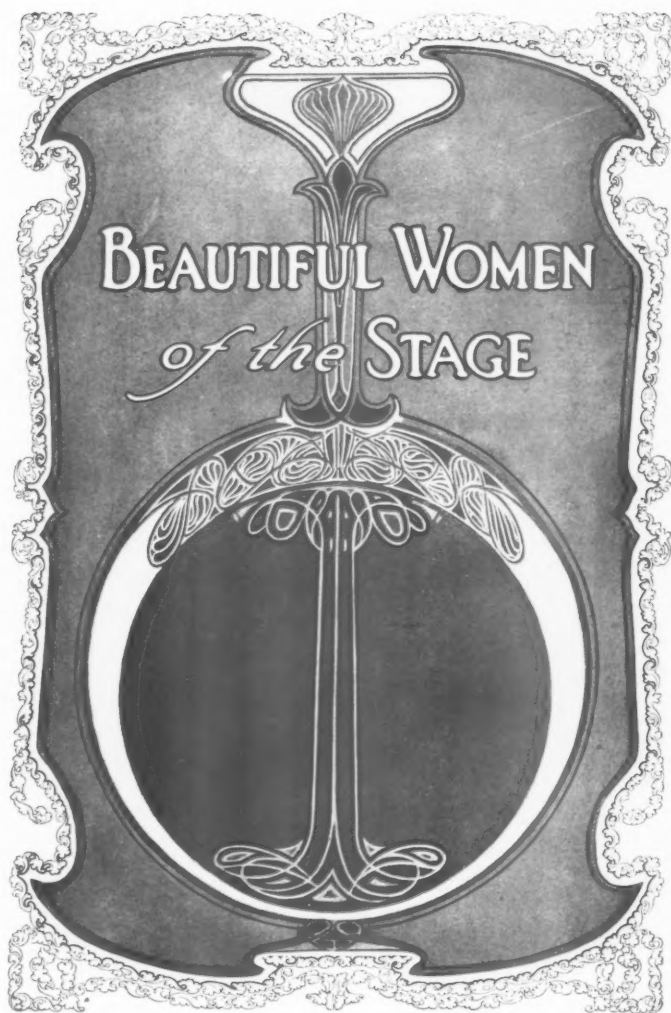
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in Gaby Deslys Company
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MADGE KENNEDY

in "Twin Beds"

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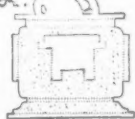
GERTRUDE CALLAHAN
in "The Elopers"
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MADLINE HARRISON
in "The Elopers"
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EMILY RUSS
in "The Whirl of the World"
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MARIOM FLEMING
Classical Dancer

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MARY ROBSON
in "The Honeymoon Express"
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EDITH HINZ
Exponent of Modern Dances
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Drawn by R. F. James

"One does not want to seem unkind, Edmund, but, *sapristi*, one needs a change."

From—"The Prodigal Husband," by Cosmo Hamilton, author of "The Blindness of Virtue," which begins on page 276.

December
1914

THE
RED BOOK
MAGAZINE

Vol. XXIV
No. 2

RAY LONG, Editor

Six Headliners for the next issue of The Red Book

IRVIN S. COBB

the best short story man in the world, had just completed "The Valley of Plenty" for THE RED BOOK when he was hurried to Europe to "cover" the war. It is the most humorous piece of writing he has ever done, and it probably is the only new short story by Irvin Cobb which will be printed in many months.

RUPERT HUGHES

the foremost novelist in America, reaches an exceedingly dramatic point in his new novel in the January issue.

EDWIN BALMER

author of that powerful serial, "The Wild Goose Chase," contributes "Unlucky at Cards," a love story as captivating as those Richard Harding Davis used to write.

RING W. LARDNER

introduces a new letter-writer to the public. We got more laughs from him than we got even from Mr. Lardner's baseball stories. "Own Your Own Home" is the title. Whether you own your own home or pay rent, this story will make you wish you didn't.

FRANK N. WESTCOTT

gives you more of that lovable story, "Hepsey Burke."

MRS. WILSON WOODROW

contributes the most dramatic short story she has ever written: the story of the woman who would rob the man of his pride as well as his soul, and think that meant love.

All these and 11 other pace-setting features, in the next—the January—issue of The Red Book Magazine. Watch for it on the news-stands December 23rd.

BROKEN GLASS

*The story of a girl who understood the magic of
a Thousand Candles," "Otherwise Phyllis,"*

ILLUSTRATED BY

A FAINT crash followed by the tinkle of broken glass caused Helen Harwood to drop her book and glance anxiously about. Then, ashamed that her nerves had been caught off-guard, she shrugged her shoulders impatiently and resumed her reading.

She had reached Mrs. Balcomb's country house near Mount Kisco that morning to spend a fortnight before proceeding to her home in New York. In April, while returning from the South, she had been a passenger on a railway train that had met with disaster, and though escaping injury herself, the shock and her experiences in helping to rescue less fortunate passengers had told upon her. Having devoted the summer to golf, tennis and canoeing at Kennebunkport, she had been congratulating herself that her nerves were again in subjection. Mrs. Balcomb was a widow, one of her mother's intimate friends, who lived very quietly, and this visit was designed to put the finishing touches to Helen's restoration.

Helen was twenty-six, and her friends were saying that it was time she married one of the many men who were in love with her. Several of these had pursued her to Kennebunkport, and at dinner tonight she was to meet Shelby Wynn, a New York physician who had lately purchased a place in Westchester County adjoining Mrs. Balcomb's. In New York, Wynn was spoken of as a coming man, and at thirty he was already established as a trustworthy consultant in nervous diseases. Helen had met him first professionally shortly after the accident, and she liked him; but, she told herself, she did not like him enough. She had never liked any man well enough; and it was said of her that she was very hard to

please, or too fond of following her own inclinations ever to surrender her freedom.

The hands that held the book were very capable-looking hands, long and supple and browned from her summer in the open. She was tall and slender, with dark hair and fine brown eyes in which there came at times a dreaminess that was pleasant to see. After leaving college she had spent a year in settlement work, and she was on many boards and committees that directed philanthropies; but she was also an exhibitor at bench shows, a crack tennis player and a collector of golf trophies won in hard-fought matches in many parts of the country.

She had dressed early and carried her book to the library in the hope of finishing it before Mrs. Balcomb came down or the other guests appeared. Her hostess' announcement that Wynn was to be among those summoned from the country-side to meet her at dinner had not wholly pleased her. She had refused to marry Wynn, but rather more reluctantly than she had declined other men; and yet she had no intention of permitting him to reënter the eligible list.

She was skimming the last page of her book when once more the sound of breaking glass startled her, and she rose quickly and stood by the table listening intently. In a house as well regulated as Mrs. Balcomb's, it was unlikely that the servants were engaged in a glass-breaking orgie as a prelude to dinner. The butler was making his last inspection of the table, and seeing him through the portières at the end of the library she wondered whether he too had heard the sound that had now for a second time disturbed her.

by Meredith Nicholson

love, by the author of *"The House of
"The Port of Missing Men,"* etc.

WALTER TITTLE

She crossed to the door and peered through the glass. It was late September, and after an unseasonably warm day a drenching rain was falling.

At either end of the balustrade of the stone terrace were handsome iron standards, each supporting three electric

lamps, and she saw at a glance that two of the globes had been broken from one of these. The light of the remaining lamp fell upon particles of broken glass on the floor, across which the rain was beating steadily.

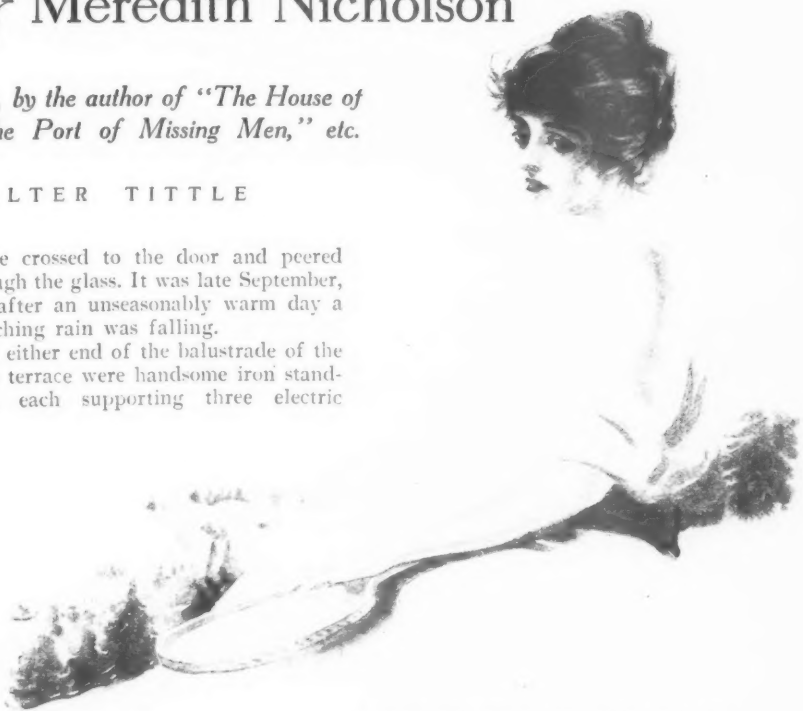
Helen satisfied herself that there was not sufficient wind stirring to shake the globes from the standards. An interval of at least five minutes had separated the breaking of the globes, and it was inconceivable that anyone malicious enough to smash a lamp would be stupidly doing it in installments when three might had been scored at practically the same instant.

Suddenly a man emerged from the shadows, and his appearance and conduct at once added to her mystification. He wore a dinner coat, and the light fell grotesquely upon the rain-splashed bosom of his dress shirt. A fedora hat

tipped slightly to one side gave him a jaunty air, and he gazed at the intact globe with a deliberation that was absurd in view of the rain that beat on him mercilessly. It was difficult to imagine that a gentleman, presumably one of the guests she was to meet a few moments later, would be childishly destroying his hostess' property.

He stepped back and glanced at the bits of broken glass at his feet, claspings his stick with both hands, as a golfer sometimes holds his putter while studying the chances of a difficult shot.

Having seemingly satisfied himself as to the nature of the glass, he crossed to the balustrade and broke the third globe with a half-hearted, timid blow. And Helen heard again, though more distinctly, the crash and tinkle that had first aroused her. The result of his act gave him apparently no pleasure; he merely looked at the broken pieces and walked absently toward the door. Helen drew back, watching him, however, with



an increasing fascination. He came quite near, and she made the most of the moment to scrutinize him, noting his clean-cut features, a slight brown mustache, and sad, bewildered eyes.

He knocked several times on the glass panel with his knuckles, then shook his head gravely and moved away, like one in a reverie, toward the steps that led down into the garden.

Helen opened the door softly, feeling that so strange a visitor should not be allowed to go unchallenged.

"Pardon me," she called in a low tone, "--is there something I can do for you?"

"Thank you very much," he replied quietly and without surprise. "I have done what I could; but there may be others that need my help. I must be going. Good-night!"

He lifted his hat with deliberate courtesy, and walked slowly away, evidently unconscious of the downpour. For a moment she heard his stick beating the path as he strolled through the garden. Helen closed the door and turned round to face Mrs. Balcomb.

"Taking a breath of air, Helen? It is close in here; I'll have Thomas open the windows. I'm afraid these people won't thank me for bringing them out on such a night. There's the bell now. Let me see, you know the Gordon Thomases, and the Mayburys, and Virginia Cawein. You haven't met the George Briggs; but Doctor Wynn you know, of course. I don't know the doctor very well myself; he's busy and very popular and hard to get. If I hadn't you to offer we shouldn't be seeing him to-night."

"Oh," said Helen lightly, "that was all over, a long time ago—all there ever was to it. But he's a nice fellow; I shall be glad to see him again."

The guests were arriving, and as Mrs. Balcomb had not gone near enough to the door to notice the damaged lamps, inquiry as to the strange man with the sad eyes, whose penchant for glass-breaking left much to be explained, must wait for a better opportunity.

Wynn took her in, but after a few commonplace as to their respective summer diversions, she cleverly frustrated his attempt to monopolize her. Helen had a reputation as a good dinner girl and a

gift for story-telling and a ready comeback; and she was unusually animated to-night. George Briggs, who faced her across the table, owned a famous Airedale kennel, and they began a highly sophisticated discussion of dogs.

"The proper study of mankind is dogs," said Frank Maybury, who was a banker and knew nothing whatever about dogs. "My main objection to dogs is that they're a nuisance when you're motoring. You'd think by this time every dog in the universe would know better than to try to stop a machine that's breaking the speed laws. The only dogs that strike me as worth while are those that occasionally save human life, like the St. Bernards; but dogs that are mere dogs, to show off in bench shows—!"

"By the same token you might say that men who are mere men—" Mrs. Briggs interrupted.

"Or, women who are mere women—" some one else suggested.

"Or girls who are just girls—" Mrs. Thomas remarked.

"Well," said Maybury, "let us talk of girls, always the most fascinating of subjects. In toastmaster language, we have with us to-night a real heroine, whose picture has never got into the newspapers. If it's an ungrateful topic, Miss Harwood, please forgive me; but I've heard quite wonderful things about what you did in helping dig out the passengers in that wreck in Virginia last spring. One of the railroad officials told me about it. He said they'd have backed you for a Carnegie medal if you hadn't been so stubbornly opposed to it."

"I'm afraid you'll learn little about that from Helen," interposed Mrs. Balcomb. "I haven't been able to coax a word out of her."

"Pardon me," murmured Maybury contritely. "If it's a disagreeable subject—"

"Oh, not at all," said Helen. "It wasn't an experience I care to repeat; but it's all over now. You see I wasn't hurt at all. I was in the last sleeper; it got an awful bang but kept the track. I walked out through the vestibule, saw that the rest of the train was badly mugged and found an axe and helped chop a few people out of their troubles."

A nice brakeman who had a broken arm and a nasty cut in the head held a lantern for me and gave orders. I did the rough, unskilled day-labor while he bossed me. It was nearly daylight, and the whole thing was rather queer and ghostly. I remember the accident only as an occasion when I saw a sunrise across a Virginia battlefield."

It was evident that this was all she meant to say about it and that what she said had been merely to save Maybury from embarrassment. Not having grasped this, Mrs. Briggs was reluctant to dismiss the subject.

"That's where poor Fred Hastings was hurt," she remarked. "He got a blow in the head that's put him out of business for good. It can't be possible that you chopped Fred out—you know Fred, of course?"

Helen frowned slightly, then answered in her quick way:

"No; I don't know him, and I didn't know he was in the wreck until I read the list of injured in the papers at Washington the next day. All I did was to use my little axe on the windows of the overturned sleeper—the collision hadn't broken half of them. I heard that one man was killed in that car and another seriously hurt. This Mr. Hastings is Tommy Hastings' brother, isn't he?" she asked.

Her question, directed to Wynn, was caught up by Maybury, who said Fred Hastings was Tom's brother but a very different sort of person.

"Tom's sown all the wild oats for the family—and hasn't finished yet. It's hard luck that Fred, who was the decentest fellow I ever knew, should have had his senses jarred out of him by a silly railroad accident. I used to have an account with Hastings Brothers; but when Fred dropped out I moved elsewhere."

Mrs. Balcomb switched the conversation to the latest developments in Irish politics, and Helen gave a little sigh of relief. Then she became aware that Wynn was addressing her in a low tone.

"A puzzling case, that of Hastings; I've been particularly interested in Fred. Pardon me for speaking of it, but I brought him down here to my place yesterday. His injury is not really so seri-

ous, but he hasn't responded to the usual treatment. The thing we haven't been able to deal with is his antipathy to glass. Hand him a glass of water, for example, and he's seized immediately with a desire to destroy it. It's a strange association of ideas—a fear that other people are still penned up as he was. I hope to get him into shape again; but just now I'm a good deal troubled. To-night he wandered away from the house, and we found him in the road near here strolling along in the rain—"

Helen's fork rattled sharply on her plate, and she shivered as though a cold wind had swept over her. Wynn looked at her with a quick professional scrutiny.

"I'm sorry," he said, "that I spoke of it," and added, smiling, "I'm afraid you're not as fit as you look. I'd been congratulating myself that you were a patient to whom I could point with pride."

"Oh, I'm perfectly well and quite able to discuss wrecks, floods, battles, murders or sudden deaths without nervousness."

Her tone reassured him. It was on the tip of Helen's tongue to describe Hastings' strange antics on Mrs. Balcomb's terrace when Wynn seized the chance to bring the talk to a personal basis.

"I'm glad you're to be here some time; I hope you'll give me a chance to see you. Can't we have some golf—or tennis? I sha'n't go in to town Saturday—wont you keep part of the day for me?"

A tense eagerness in his tone gave her pause. She had experienced no thrill at meeting him again, and was not anxious to encourage him to think she might be willing to reopen what she had fully determined was a closed incident.

"I'm altogether at Mrs. Balcomb's service," she replied evasively, "and she has suggested a good deal of motoring. She's pretty lonely here, and I want to be with her as much as possible."

"I'm afraid you mean to be hard on me," he said.

"Of course you know I don't mean to be," she replied quickly; and then added with a smile: "You see you're much younger than Mrs. Balcomb and not entitled to special consideration—and that makes a difference."

THE next day there was tennis with tea afterward at the Maybury's. Helen told Mrs. Balcomb not to send the car for her as she could easily walk home over the fields.

When she left, shortly before six, Mrs. Maybury accompanied her through her garden and pointed out a path that zigzagged across a rough field.

"You will skim the edge of Dr. Wynn's place," she remarked significantly; "but I fancy he wouldn't complain if he caught you trespassing."

"I shall avoid his territory," laughed Helen, "and make for that hill with its crown of Christmas trees. I've been curious to survey the landscape from that point, and I can jump from it right down into Mrs. Balcomb's kitchen garden."

Her two hours of lively tennis had left her unwearied, and she strode off buoyantly with her racket under her arm. When she reached the hill it proved to be more formidable than it had appeared from a distance, but she plunged into its tangle and gained the top breathlessly. The way home was clear enough now, but she stopped to rest and to fix the points of the landscape in her mind with a view to future tramps.

As her eyes wandered over the scene she caught a glimpse of a man running. He emerged from a strip of woodland and moved rapidly. She lost him as he dipped down into a small ravine; and then another man, evidently in pursuit, appeared several hundred yards beyond.

The pursuer paused at a stone fence and stared about as though baffled by the disappearance of his quarry. In a moment he turned and ran along the fence toward the Wynn house. After several minutes the pursued crawled out of a thicket, climbed halfway up the hill slope and passed round to the Balcomb side and looked down into the garden.

It was Hastings, unmistakably, and it was clear that he had eluded his guard and was bent on amusing himself after his own fashion. He was dressed in knickerbockers and Norfolk jacket and wore a cap; and he carried a light stick, as on the previous evening.

In speaking of his patient, Wynn had

not intimated that Hastings was a dangerous person to be at large; and there had been nothing alarming in his globe-breaking, nor in his manner toward her when she accosted him on the terrace.

She began descending slowly, pausing now and then to peer through the shrubbery to make sure she was keeping him in her path. When she reached a point slightly behind and above him, she checked her pace. He had not seemed to notice the swish of the released shrubbery through which she had crept and stumbled, but it occurred to her that it would be well not to alarm him by appearing too precipitately. He was leaning upon his stick, gazing down upon the garden fixedly.

"The view is lovely," she remarked quietly, so near that she could have put out her racket and touched him.

He turned slowly, evidently reluctant to withdraw his eyes from the scene below. As their gaze met he doffed his cap, and then half thrust it boyishly into his pocket.

"I dare say it is," he remarked soberly, "but I was thinking of something quite different."

She grasped a maple sapling and let herself down beside him.

"I saw that something interested you very much," she said, "and I wondered whether you had designs on the turnip patch! Of course you hadn't really!"

The perplexity with which he had regarded the broken globes came into his face as he looked at her.

"I seem to remember you, but it's not very clear. I have seen you somewhere, I think. It's very painful not to be able to think clearly;" and he passed his hand over his forehead. "I have been ill; I'm not quite up to the mark, you see."

"I shouldn't have thought so. I think you look a little tired, though. I saw you running awhile ago, off yonder."

His lips tightened and the dazed look passed from his face. He smiled quite naturally and shrugged his shoulders.

"Did you see me dodge that chap? He has better legs but my tactics are superior. It was Scaife—the fellow they have watching me. Rather rough to be guarded—kept locked up—it's beginning to bore me."

Then his flash of resentment passed and the bewildered look came again into his eyes.

"I know you have been ill, but your troubles are nearly over now," said Helen. "You shouldn't go out in the rain as you did last night. I avoid playing such pranks myself and you can see that I'm a very healthy person."

He nodded gravely and smiled.

"I saw you over there last night; you were very kind. But there was nothing to be done—nothing!" he ended despairingly.

She began moving slowly down, and he followed her docilely. His very gentleness, the melancholy that seemed to possess him, moved her to compassion.

He continued beside her after they reached the level. The last rays of the sun glinted sharply on the greenhouses on Mrs. Balcomb's preserves; and Hastings' gaze seemed fixed upon them pensively.

"There's a work to do there," he remarked, pointing with his stick. "But I'm unequal to it; I haven't the strength. I never seem able to save the people that are still locked in."

She hesitated between humoring him and flatly contradicting him. Then she faced him laughingly.

"Don't be absurd! There's absolutely nothing in those houses but plants—chrysanthemums and things like that! If you break them you merely give the gardener trouble and cause Mrs. Balcomb annoyance and expense. Let me see: you were in Harry Harwood's class at Yale, weren't you? Harry's my cousin. He moved to Seattle and is becoming something important out there."

"Fine chap, Harry. Had a long talk with him at commencement two years ago."

"And we must know a lot of other people," Helen continued. "The Dudley Parkers, and the Raymonds—you know Jessie Raymond, of course."

"Dud Parker's an old pal of mine," he replied promptly. "I was his best man, wasn't I? Yes; I remember the wedding perfectly; it was at Kennebunkport—in September. It must be three years ago—odd little stone church right down on the sea."

She saw that her recital of familiar names had interested him and that the recollection of his friend's wedding had touched some chord of memory.

"I remember Dud's wedding particularly," he went on, "because the minister—another bright light of our class—took the wrong train out of Boston and came motoring in at the last minute from some place up in New Hampshire. And Dud was so rattled and worried that I had hard work to keep him from jumping into the ocean."

The revival of old memories evidently gave him pleasure; he talked smoothly and coherently in a light, whimsical fashion that constantly invited responses in the same key.

Finding suddenly that they had passed into Wynn's preserves, she stopped and put out her hand.

"I must go back," she said. "I've enjoyed our walk immensely."

"You've been very kind to me—kinder than anyone has been for a long time. But I don't quite understand how it all happened. We've met somewhere before, but it's not very clear. Maybe—"

He ended helplessly, slowly shaking his head.

"If it isn't quite clear, you shouldn't bother about it. Some other time it will come to you; please forget it now," she urged kindly.

Then slowly, as he looked into her face, the light of recollection came into his eyes, and he laughed a low, happy laugh, and stretched out his hand quickly as though fearing she might escape him.

"Please don't go; stand just as you are! It's coming back to me and I'm afraid if you move even a little bit, that would spoil it all. It happened this way," he began slowly: "I was all crumpled up under the car window, and pinned in there like a bug in a museum for people to walk by and look at. And my head hurt horribly; but I could hear people crying and the sound of escaping steam somewhere. Then a lantern stopped close to the glass and I saw you quite distinctly; and then you smashed the window and they took me out. You did that; you were there?" he cried eagerly.

"Yes; it must have been I; but I



"It's all over, Wynn," said Hastings, taking his turban.



of water and holding it up steadily for them all to see.

didn't see you. I knew afterward, though, that you had been in the wreck."

Her heart was in a wild tumult as she realized that this might be a critical moment in the history of his malady, and she was fearful lest some unfortunate word might snap the slender chord he was piecing together. "But, you know," she went on quietly, "that's a long time ago; and we mustn't think of it any more. I was ill myself for a while; but you see how perfectly well I am—just as you are going to be now that you remember how it all happened."

"But the others—clamped tight in their berths—I must save them; it's my duty!" he said, and the light went out of his eyes again.

In her absorption she had failed to see Wynn, who was walking toward them. He came up hurriedly and ignoring Hastings, spoke directly to Helen.

"I hope you haven't been annoyed, Miss Harwood. They'd quite lost track of Mr. Hastings at the house. I regret this very much."

A swift look of displeasure crossed Hastings' face, and he spoke bitterly.

"I've been quite within bounds; but I did run away from Scaife. He's not a nurse; he's a spy, a policeman."

"Yes, you gave Scaife the slip; and you'd better go back to the house now; it's nearly dinner time."

Hastings nodded carelessly but remained where he was.

"Mr. Hastings and I have been talking of some people we both know very well," Helen explained. "We met over yonder as I was coming from Mrs. Maybury's and I was just about to leave him."

"She doesn't think I'm as mad as you do," Hastings remarked. "Miss Harwood was helping me to find the way back; I had almost got the key in the lock of the closed door, and now you have spoiled it all. Ah, Wynn, you don't want me to come back! You want to keep me locked in—you and Tom!" And he turned away with a pitiful, despairing gesture.

Wynn glanced from one to the other questioningly, and then, murmuring an apology, he led Hastings toward the house.

FOR several days Helen's time was fully occupied with social engagements, and she saw no more of Hastings. Then one afternoon as she was returning from a tramp, following a small brook that came singing through a woodland she had not explored before, she heard angry voices on the farther side of the little stream.

Two men confronted each other, engaged in an angry dispute. One of these was Hastings and the other she assumed to be Scaife, his nurse or guard.

"I tell you I have a perfect right to go out alone; I'm not going to have you following me about. It's not a square deal; it wasn't understood when I agreed to come here!"

"You've busted all the windows in Mr. Maybury's garage; that's what you've done. If you ever try that trick again I'm going to lock you up; that's all there is to that," the man replied wrathfully.

"It's none of your affair what I do; there's no law for holding me here. I'm going to do as I like. Now please oblige me by clearing out. I'll be home in time for dinner."

Scaife grasped his arm and there was a sharp struggle. He was a big, burly fellow and Hastings was no match for him. He dropped his stick and Scaife caught it up and struck him with it smartly across the shoulders, and then began urging him roughly toward the house.

Hastings protested in a loud tone and continued to struggle. Then Scaife saw Helen, who by this time had crossed a rustic bridge and was running swiftly toward them.

"Beg pardon, miss, but this gentleman's a patient at Dr. Wynn's," said the guard. "He aint straight in his upper story and slips away from me every time he gets a chance."

"I was not running off. I was merely out for exercise, and they're afraid I'll talk to somebody! They're afraid I'll talk to you! That's what's wrong with them." And Hastings glanced at Helen appealingly.

His humiliation at being caught in this plight was plainly evident. No matter how unruly he might have been, the

guard was not justified in striking him; there was no debating that, and her heart grew hot with indignation.

"I can't believe Dr. Wynn would want a guest in his house to be mistreated," said Helen, her anger mounting.

"I'm sorry it was necessary," said the man hastily.

"I saw it all," she retorted, "and it certainly was not necessary. Mr. Hastings is an invalid, and not to be treated like a brute."

"Well, I didn't hurt him," said Scaife. "But it's my orders to keep track of him."

"I don't like your way of doing it. I can't believe you were told to strike him. Suppose you go ahead and I'll see that Mr. Hastings reaches the house in plenty of time."

She walked up to him and put out her hand for the stick, which he gave her grudgingly.

"Of course, miss, you don't understand. You see—"

"I understand perfectly; keep your hands off and I'll see that he returns immediately!"

"Yes; there'll be no trouble about it, Scaife," said Hastings.

Scaife walked off doggedly, glancing back from time to time.

Helen held out the stick toward Hastings.

"Then you're not afraid of me?" he asked, taking it and balancing it lightly in his hands.

"Most certainly not! That man's not fit to have charge of a sick person. I'm going to complain of him to Dr. Wynn."

"No! No! Promise me you won't!" he cried huskily; and the fear came back into his eyes.

"I'm sure the Doctor wouldn't have you ill-treated. I shall speak to him at once; it's perfectly outrageous, contemptible!"

"How kind you are to me," he said chokingly. "But you don't understand; there are things you can't know. If I were only right again,"—he tapped his forehead,—"if I didn't know that so many people were waiting for me to help them—"

He gazed off wistfully toward the horizon.

"But haven't I told you you mustn't think of that!" she said gently. "That was so long ago! You remember me; you told me you remembered the lantern and the smashing of the glass. Well, I know that everyone was taken out; the trains have been running safely ever since, for many months."

"You think that? You believe that?" he asked eagerly.

"I'm perfectly sure of it!" And then, seeing that she had his attention, that his eyes were very steadily and sanely watching her, she added: "You don't think I'd have come away while anyone was pinned in the overturned car, do you? Why, when you insist that anyone was left there in the plight we found you in, you are charging me and the others who tried to help that night with terrible heartlessness. So there you see—"

HER way of putting it impressed him; and as they walked slowly along the path that led to Dr. Wynn's house he continued to be wholly reasonable and tractable.

"Such an accident as that can hardly happen again," she went on; "certainly not to you and me! I was troubled by it myself for some time afterward, but the only thing I'm interested in now is in seeing you forget it as I do. You must think only of pleasant things—that scarlet maple over there, for instance; the brown stubble in the fields beyond and the green line of pines down by the brook."

"When you speak of those things they seem very beautiful; but why doesn't anyone else talk to me like that? Why do they pen me up and send that man to watch me? Why does Tom—"

He ended impatiently, and struck the path smartly with his stick.

"Tom?" she inquired. "Do you mean your brother Tom?"

"Yes; good old Tom," he said smilingly. "Of course Tom's all right. But I don't understand why he keeps me here."

"Of course no one can keep you here after you're well, after you've got that foolish notion out of your head," she urged gently.

"You say things as though you meant

them. I'm very greatly troubled; you wouldn't say a thing like that, would you, just to quiet me so I'd do what they want me to?"

"Assuredly not!"

"And you don't know Tom?—he didn't tell you to talk to me, to try to persuade me—"

"I never saw him in my life!" she said earnestly.

"Then let us shake hands! I believe you are my friend. And I need friends; I need you very much—just as I did that night when you—when—"

"Oh, but you are to forget that! If we're to be friends you mustn't refer to it at all!"

"I'm quite convinced that you're right," he replied after a moment. "I have an idea," he added more brightly, and with his frank smile that quite transformed his face, "that you're usually right about everything!"

They were close to the house now, and she saw Scaife looking down at them from the veranda high above. There was much in Hastings' detention that puzzled her; she had wondered at his reference to his brother, but Wynn's story that he had brought his patient into the country for quiet was perfectly plausible. And Wynn's reputation, socially and professionally, was high. But the sight of Scaife moved her to sudden resolve.

"Can't we do some tennis?" she asked. "I shall be here for ten days longer, and there's a good court at Mrs. Balcomb's. Maybe it would help you to forget; and I should like it. Let us try the first morning you're free. To-morrow or the day after—I'm sure Dr. Wynn would have no objection. Perhaps I ought to ask him—"

"No; please don't ask him; he'd be sure to refuse. And I couldn't—I couldn't bear to have him refuse! I'll try to come in the morning. But please tell no one. Yes, I shall be there; shall we say eleven? Thank you; and goodbye!"

He looked at her fixedly; and there was an elation in his tone that was new.

HELEN had seen that particular look before, in the eyes of a good many men, and as she resumed her walk the

recollection of it troubled her not a little. She assured herself as she plunged through a rough wood, rejoicing in the resistance of its tangled underbrush, that she was not in the least concerned in the affairs of Frederick Hastings. But when she turned her thoughts upon other things they drifted back inevitably to him.

She reached the house just as Mrs. Balcomb arrived after a day in town, and they had tea together on the terrace.

"I'm ashamed, Helen, to have left you alone all day, but my lawyers never call me in unless it's imperative and I hope to have a long period of peace now. How did the day go with you?"

"Well, the luncheon at the Cawein's was a great success, and then I came home and went for a tramp. And, by the way, while I was on my tramp, I met that Mr. Hastings who's staying at Dr. Wynn's."

"The crazy man!" exclaimed Mrs. Balcomb. "My dear child, you don't mean that Wynn is allowing him to run loose over the country!"

"He's not at all dangerous," Helen replied, laughing at her friend's agitation. "To be real frank, I've met him several times!"

Seeing that her friend's anxiety had been aroused, she told the whole story of her various meetings with Hastings with particularity, not omitting the appearance of Wynn or the disagreeable impression left by her encounter with the guard.

"And I've asked him to come over and play tennis in the morning," she concluded. "I hope you'll not scold me for that; I'm sure you'll feel about him just as I do."

"Well, I don't know about this, Helen; you never can tell when such people will break out into tantrums and kill somebody. I'll have the gardener hang about to help you out if he grows violent."

Her apprehensions were so sincere that Helen laughed aloud; and Mrs. Balcomb smiled grimly.

"So it was he who broke those globes the other night, and you never told me! I charged it against those Italians who've been working on the road. I suppose,"



"This is the age of miracles," he was saying.

she added, "he's likely to smash all the windows in the house at any time!"

"If he does," said Helen, laughing at her friend's earnestness, "I shall insist on paying the bill!"

AT nine o'clock that evening Mrs. Balcomb suggested that they take a breath of air before retiring. As they slowly patrolled the terrace they heard some one running through the remote recesses of the garden, followed immediately by the subdued murmur of voices. Mrs. Balcomb stepped to the switch by the door and turned off the lights.

"We'd better go inside, Helen. If there's a burglar down there we don't want to be shot at. As like as not it's that man from Dr. Wynn's again. This is a nice state of things, having a lunatic running about at night!"

She became interested now in a lantern that danced toward them through the garden, lingering hesitatingly as the bearer paused to flash his light into the paths that branched off from the main walk.

"That's Ferguson, my gardener," declared Mrs. Balcomb. "I'd know his limp anywhere."

She called to the man sharply to explain himself, and he came at once to the foot of the steps.

"A man's run off from Dr. Wynn's and I've been helping the Doctor's people look for 'im," Ferguson explained. "I guess he aint on these premises."

"Make sure he isn't," Mrs. Balcomb commanded. "We don't want any lunatics about here. It's a perfect outrage," she declared with rising wrath, "to keep a man like that here."

"Well," said Ferguson, drawing nearer, "the gentleman's brother wanted to take him away to-night, and he made a fuss. It's a very sad case, ma'am."

"It is indeed," affirmed Mrs. Balcomb. "Call the chauffeur and have him go over the ground with you."

Half an hour was spent in this inspection, and while they waited for the gardener to report, Mrs. Balcomb inveighed to Helen against Wynn's unneighborliness in turning his house into an asylum for lunatics.

"I don't like this effort to carry Mr. Hastings away at this hour," said Helen. "I think—" she began and hesitated.

"Well," said Mrs. Balcomb, "we can't mix up in a row like that."

"No; but if the man is being kidnapped and carried off we ought to help him if we can."

"Helen Harwood," said Mrs. Balcomb sternly, "what on earth are you thinking about! Do you think that while you're under my chaperonage I'll allow you to become interested in an unfortunate man who's lost his wits! What could I ever say to your mother if anything so perfectly ghastly should happen!"

"That's too funny to talk about!" said Helen. "But I'd like to help him; he's so pathetic. And there's certainly reason to believe that his brother's attitude isn't friendly. I think," she added boldly, "that we ought to find and shelter him until the case can be investigated. A man in Mr. Hastings' condition oughtn't to be mistreated, and that guard they have over there is a brute, from what I saw myself."

"But it isn't our affair. Helen, and no doubt the man's gone. I'll communicate with my attorney to-morrow if you think best, and tell him your story. Of course it would be none of Ashton Ramsey's business, but if everything isn't straight he'd know what could be done."

"Better than that," said Helen, "I think we ought to make some effort to help to-night. When Ferguson comes back—"

By the time the gardener reappeared she had persuaded Mrs. Balcomb that they ought to exhaust all the possibilities in the search for Hastings. Dr. Wynn, Scaife and a man whom Ferguson said was the patient's brother were continuing the search toward the Maybury premises.

"Please let me go through the garden with Ferguson," Helen urged; "there's a possibility that he's still about here."

Mrs. Balcomb reluctantly consented, establishing herself on the dark terrace with the chauffeur as guard.

As they set off through the garden Helen drew from Ferguson a more complete story of Hastings' flight.

"I was over there havin' a pipe with

Dr. Wynn's gardener, miss, and it's not my way to talk o' things I see, but there was a row on the veranda between the doctor and the sick man's brother about takin' 'im away. The doctor didn't want 'im to go, and the brother had come in a big machine on purpose to take 'im. And while they were talkin', the patient bolted and we all set off to hunt 'im. It was very queer, some way."

Helen's wrath rose as she recalled Hastings' unvarying gentleness and submissiveness.

They had gone as far as the foot of the hill where her second meeting with Hastings had occurred and were slowly returning. When they reached the long greenhouses that had fascinated Hastings that afternoon Helen paused.

"No use wastin' time here," said Ferguson. "I took Dr. Wynn through there when we first came over. I guess I better lock the door now."

He felt in his pocket for the key, holding the lantern under his arm. Helen remembered that she had read somewhere that unbalanced minds often show great cunning, and it was hardly possible that Hastings, alarmed by the unexpected attempt to remove him, would risk capture by lingering in the neighborhood.

She stood beside Ferguson staring absently through the glass door.

The lantern rays lighted the interior dimly, and as Ferguson bent to adjust the key in the lock Helen seized and held his arm.

"Wait," she said softly. "I saw something move."

"Better step back, miss, and let me go in. It must ha' been the shadow of that palm."

She clutched his arm more tightly. They were both aware that a man had crawled from under one of the long greenhouse tables and was standing erect close to the door. Ferguson held the lantern high against the narrow glass panel, and the light revealed Hastings unmistakably. And it was quite clear to Helen that he saw and recognized her.

He stared for an instant with the puzzled intentness she had seen in his eyes before, shook his head resolutely and sprang forward and drove his fist through the glass.

At the crash Ferguson jerked Helen away and flung the door open.

"Don't touch him; don't speak to him!" she cried.

Snatching the lantern she stepped inside and held it on a level with Hastings' face. He had cut his hand badly and was gazing at it as though mystified by the injury.

"That was very foolish," she began quietly. "And I thought we had decided that you wouldn't do such foolish things any more."

"But I don't know — I don't know what I have done! But I have saved you; I have paid the debt!"

"You have hurt your hand," she replied evenly; "and you must come to Mrs. Balcomb's house and attend to it."

"But something very strange has happened to me," he said wonderingly. "It was just as it was that night—the man with the lantern, and you, through the glass; and I must have done just what I knew I must do to be—quite well again."

He took the lantern and stepped to the door, looking at the broken pane; and then his gaze came back to her face. She was afraid to speak, afraid of breaking the spell that was upon him. It might be that what he said was true, that having performed the act of expiation his hallucination demanded, it would never trouble him again. He was talking now very quietly, though with a note of jubilation in his voice.

"It's just as though I had really saved you," he said; "it was that which troubled me so long—that I must save some one just as you saved me. And now the old fears, the old horrors are gone—quite gone. And it had to be you—somehow I must have felt that all the time. But you are you," he went on with a breaking voice. "You *are* you and you will not leave me, will you? It would be very cruel if you should; it would break my heart; I couldn't bear that, to find that you are not really you, not the one it had to be!"

"IT'S possible," said Mrs. Balcomb the next morning when she and Helen met in the library, "he may be all right. I've heard that such things do happen. And I must say he acted reasonably

enough while we were bandaging his hand. He'll be down in a minute—and would you mind telling me just what we're going to do with him?"

"I hope," said Helen, "that he'll have his own ideas about that."

"I sent Larkins to ask if he could serve him in any way, and he said he'd be down at once."

"I think," laughed Helen, "that we'd better not tell him that you had Larkins sleep in front of his door all night; he might think it inhospitable!"

An instant later Hastings appeared at the doorway, and crossed at once to Mrs. Balcomb.

"I'm sorry it must be my left," he said, holding his bandaged hand up ruefully. "You were very kind to take me in—particularly when I'd never been introduced—to either of you," he added, turning to Helen with a smile. "I thank you both, with all my heart."

While they were at breakfast Dr. Wynn was announced.

Hastings looked up quickly as the butler mentioned Wynn's name.

"We may as well see him here," said Helen in reply to Mrs. Balcomb's glance of inquiry.

As Wynn entered Hastings rose.

"I'm sorry, indeed, Mrs. Balcomb, if anything unpleasant has occurred," Wynn began.

"You have lost a patient unless I'm very greatly mistaken," said Mrs. Balcomb, who was now quite proud of her part in the night's affair. "Mr. Hastings is my guest; in fact, he spent the night here."

Wynn's gaze swept the crystal on the table and the breakfast-room windows significantly.

"It's all over, Wynn," said Hastings, taking his tumbler of water and holding it up steadily for them all to see. "I know what you're thinking of; you see it's quite gone—that queer ghost that haunted me. And I'm going in to town in an hour, to take up my work where I left it, and you may say to Tom that I bear him no ill-feeling. I think it was the fear of what he might do, and his antagonism, that kept me back. But all those things are over and I'm sure—

I'm absolutely confident that my dark days are over."

"I don't understand what's happened, but I hope that's true," said Wynn. "I want to say to you all that I did the best I could; that I was not a party to Tom Hastings' plans. I was utterly unprepared for the step he wished to carry out last night. I had not understood before his utter baseness, or that he was trying to use me."

Hastings put out his hand quickly.

"I believe that, Wynn; and I knew during the worst of my trouble that it was Tom who kept that fellow Scaife after me; that Tom forced him on you. But I bear Tom no ill-feeling; I hope to straighten out my affairs with him before night."

The women left them alone in the library for an hour.

"You have done what I failed to do, Miss Harwood," said Wynn to Helen as he was leaving. "I believe there is no ground to fear that Mr. Hastings will ever have a recurrence of his trouble. I assure you that I'm a happier man for this; only—"

The implications of that "only" required some magnanimity on her part. She walked over to him as he stood awkwardly and dejectedly near Hastings.

"I'm sure," said she, "that you are a man of honor; and I'm sorry I ever doubted you; please think of me always as the most grateful of your patients!"

A WEEK later, on the night before she was to leave for home, Hastings and Helen were watching a fire in the library fireplace—the first of the season. They had been engaged for twenty-four hours, and the day had been spent in long-distance telephoning supplemented by telegraphing, in an effort to explain matters to her astonished family.

"This is the age of miracles," he was saying, as he bent toward her and clasped her hand. "I might have gone on with that shadow over me to the end of my days if you hadn't—"

"Oh, you foolish man," she cried happily; "you don't know yet what happened! You don't know even now, dear, that I loved you back to the light!"



The Cruise of a Christmas Caravan

By Harris Merton Lyon

*THE Night Before Christmas, told from the viewpoint of those
who act as old Saint Nick and Dunder and Blitzen in 1914.*

Author of "The Two Thousandth Christmas," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ALEXANDER POPINI

BOB and His Lordship trudged steadily on, pulling their heavy load. Bob was young and had big, engaging eyes and a desire to be companionable. His Lordship was old. He tried to make out that he wasn't, but he was gray around the nose—and that is a sure sign. Besides which he had an aloof and dismal stare, and all the engaging manners of a stingy and dignified duke. As they sweated up a slight hill, their feet slipping out from under them at every step because of the abominable icy pavements, Bob slewed

over and grunted into His Lordship's ear:

"This ends it for *me*. I'm going to get a decent job next year."

His Lordship, of course, said nothing.

The ice-cold air came up in steam around their noses; and little curls of steam reluctantly parted from their legs. The going could be made only under a fearful strain, and the muscles of their necks, as they bent further into their collars, became hard and yet yielding, like sacks of sand.

Behind their backs a man sang hap-

pily, yet without much gusto, through his nose:

Roll, Jordan, roll; roll, Jordan, roll—
I'se gwine to go to hebben when I die,
To hear sweet Jordan roll—

and broke off suddenly into: "Git along up, now, Bob! *Don't* go slidin' all over the Avenoo on your ear."

"You mark my words," repeated Bob to His Lordship. "This ends it for me. Next year I get me a decent job. I pull no more express wagons during Christmas week."

His Lordship looked bored and slammed his feet down stodgily. The younger generation struck him as being made up of chatter-brains; but he was too austere to permit himself the remark. Bob thought: "I'll bust up his dignity for him,"—and tried to nip his partner in the jaw. His Lordship jerked away his head in irritation.

"Wait till this night's out," he cautioned the younger. "You wont be so confoundedly brash."

And His Lordship was right. It was then only eight o'clock of Christmas Eve. They had at least four more hours of tough work ahead of them. And they had been out, always heavily laden, since eight o'clock that morning, with but an hour off at noon and an hour off at supper-time. Oh, of course, it happened to be an "emergency;" and Christmas week is always a heavy week on any beast-of-burden or human-of-burden; and Christmas comes but once a year; and all that sort of thing. But—thought Bob to himself—here I am, just the same; and there are four more hours of it!

Christmas gifts! His Lordship, too, sour of belly and tired of leg, abominated the sound of the words. He despised the silly little human beings who crowded into one week, by some sort of madness, their entire generosity for a whole year. And, of course, there was always ice on the pavement for that week. Ice, of course. His hip was sore. He had fallen yesterday. Miserable men!

His head always drooped when he was thinking, and his muscles unconsciously relaxed.

"Your Lordship!" sang out the nasal voice; and a whip flickered over his flank.

"That's right; beat me," thought His Lordship. "Merry Christmas! Give me a cut with the lash."

Then the whip, almost automatically, fell on Bob. Bob laid back his ears and though he pulled a little ahead he muttered through his pouted lips:

"That settles it. I get another job. No more of this for me."

And he too fell a-dreaming in the terrible cold. He could get his tail docked and develop into a nice fat old cob: drag an old lady around in a four-wheeler every other day, to make her calls: spend the off days in a nice box stall, eating fat oats and juicy hay. Um-mum! Juicy hay!

Roll, Jordan, roll; roll—

A muffled figure beside the singer swung a lantern around and started to look at the book.

"No need o' that, young feller," interrupted the singer, cheerily (and at the same time putting the Young Feller in his place). "I knows 'em all by heart, *this* night of Our Lord. The next is Missis Stuyvesant Van Twiller, East Thirty-seventh Street; and the next un' is Miss Muriel Goelick, East Thirti-ninth Street; and the *next* is Adam Beaumont—the old gent, not the wild un'—on Fortieth Street.

—Jordan, roll:

I wants to go to hebben when I die,
To hear sweet Jordan roll.

THE Young Feller re-hung the lantern over his head in bitter silence. He cogitated a minute and then spat dismally out over His Lordship's trace. It was evidently going to be a fine rotten night for him.

"Aint you goin' to let me make even *one* delivery, Ike?" he asked the singer.

Ike, a mittened, ulstered, muffled chunk, hurled himself back on the seat and laughed heartily. "What, young feller? On Christmas Eve? You just wait till you've growed up." (The Young Feller was twenty-seven.) "Wait till you've married and got a youngster, and

the comp'ny has give you a route and a wagon of your own. *Then* you can collect the tips of a Christmas Eve for *yourself*. I've worked all year just look-in' forrerd to this here night. I've swapped the time o' day with all these grand ladies and helped 'em to a good laugh—bless their hearts; don't you ever go a-thinkin' it's above 'em to poke fun with a common ol' express wagon driver—an' I've cottoned to 'em all—what fer? Why, young feller, just for this here one night. I aint got this rich man's route fer nothin'....

Roll, Jordan, roo-oo-oll....

"Aint a one of 'em but'll give me a tip or a present of some kind to-night," he added, in pleased reflection.

But the rest of the company remained disgruntled. A plague on his laughing and singing, thought His Lordship; the ice was getting into his old blood. *Slap, slip; slap, slip; slap, slap, slap* went the horses' feet.

"By the bones of my sire," grumbled Bob, between breaths, "I *can't* make these blasted shoes take hold. Why don't they give us calks? Good long calks, three inches long and sharp as bayonet-points? Something I could sock into the ground and make stick!"

His Lordship maintained that even such calks wouldn't get through the ice; and moreover the City wouldn't allow them. It was bad enough, the way the pavement was punched up now.

The Young Feller, who had been nursing his gloom, broke out: "Looky here, Ike. What'm I sitting up here freezing myself to death for if I aint to make no deliveries? I'm delivery boy, aint I? I might better have been out with my girl to-night sashayin' around the stores."

"You can hold the hosses and keep the thieves away."

A pent-up whine of language came pouring out through the naked orifice between the Young Feller's ear-muffs. "Hold the hosses!" he cried. "Hold the hosses! As if that blasted Lordship'd stir a foot if you didn't beat him half to death! As if that Bob aint the slyest, laziest devil that ever loafed in a set of

harness! An' I'm to set up here an' freeze to death! Me, the reg'lar delivery boy!" A note of passion crept into his frozen tones. "An' you call yourself a Socialist! My God! I can't see that kind o' Socialism, I can't, where I sit up here an' freeze to death an' don't git nothin'!... Merry Christmas, too. *Merry* Christmas! If I wasn't afraid my jaw'd crack like a icicle I'd try to laugh, I would."

Ike preferred to remain reminiscent. "They's thieves about, too, a night like this. I 'member Gus Strong, he went into a s'loon—not to take a drink but just to git warmed up—and took his delivery man with him; and bless my stars if a couple of crooks didn't out and drive his wagon off to some 'fence' down town. Got away with all the stuff, too. *Here's* the Van Twillers! Gimme that box there."

THE Young Feller swung the lantern and picked out the heavy box. Ike lumbered up the steps with it and rang the bell. The door opened. A blaze of light which seemed miraculously warm flooded the street, the smoking horses, stertorous and stolid, and the sneering, muffled figure of the Young Feller.

Sure enough, some one invited Ike indoors. The door slammed behind his waddling form. Of a sudden, in the street, it was dismally cold and dark again.

"Calls hisself a Socialist," sneered the Young Feller.

"He didn't even stop to put a blanket on us," growled Bob. "He don't know but he might be an hour." His Lordship seemed bored, but breathing hard. Bob gave him a swift bump in the jaw with his nose. The old stiff!

A devil of a job to be in, thought Bob. He didn't care if nobody ever got a Christmas present. But he'd be out of it next year. Oh, yes. They couldn't keep *him* down. He had ambition. He'd bob 'em. He'd bob along with an old lady bumping behind him in one of these black, beetle-bellied four-wheelers. Merry Christmas, indeed! He hoped he didn't break a leg.

"Thank you, ma'am! Thank you, ma'am! Thank you, ma'am! Same to you,

ma'am! An' to all the blessed childern, ma'am! I got one myself, ma'am."

It was Ike, backing his way out. As he climbed to his seat, breathing in the fluster of unwonted etiquette, he said under his breath:

"By gonnies, she give me a ten-spot. There's a fine woman for you—Missis Van Twiller—she's a reggler feller. *she* is. G'wan you now and git out o' this!" he sang out suddenly to the horses. "Your Lordship! Is yer foot froze to the groun'? You, Bob; shake a leg now."

"An' champagne?" asked the Young Feller, greedily.

"*And champagne,*" admitted the jovial Ike. "A nice dinky glass in the hall, my boy, to do the thing up right and dandy. That there's the way with a reggler feller like Missis Van Twiller—'James, take out a glass of champagne to Ike, please'—an' here comes that ol' buckler lookin' like a bull-frog, a-servin' me the compliments o' the season on a little silver plate. . . . *Ho, you!* Git along now an' git along fast, er you wont git there till night 'fore last." As is sometimes the case among men who are much around horses, Ike broke off into improvised rhyme as he drove.

"I smelt it on your breath," commented the Young Feller. Then he burst out, intolerantly: "Don't tell *me* it's warmin'. I *know* it's warmin', you dag-gone, daggone Socialist, you! Yah!" And he spat again.

A FINE caravan for Santa Claus! A grumbling, stumbling, slipping, sliding, cold, tired little Christmas cosmos. Acres of sleet, miles of night. Houses closed tight, their fronts frozen, and curtains drawn shut at the windows. But, oh, the difference when the caravan drove up! In the gift box on wheels a rare store of sweet fruits and beautiful flowers: flashing gems that were still to have a woman's eyes out-shine them; warming furs that still were innocent of the greater warmth of woman's blood; candies for maidens; toys for babes; gifts, gifts, gifts. From lovers in far countries, aching with memory; from the folks back home still cherishing those who had left the roof-tree; from old people going into the shadow to

tiny tads just coming into the sun. Gifts, gifts, gifts. Welcomed with young shrieks of joy, and pleased old smiles. Open go the silent doors, out pours the merry, golden light!

A box of curiosity, with Ike as Santa Claus! And there stand his reindeer, young Bob and His Lordship, old and haughty.

"Sign here, sir." "Sign here, ma'am."

"And that's for you, Ike, and Merry Christmas to you!"

"Thank you, ma'am." "Thank you, sir." "And the same to you."

Up again on the seat, and off again. And:

Roll, Jordan, roll: roll, Jordan, roll:
I'se gwine to go to hebbin when I die,
To hear sweet Jordan roll.

Many a time that long, cruel night Bob looked at the self-same scene with blazing eyes of wrath. Many a time His Lordship, with the smoldering, gloomy eyes of the settled old horse-of-business.

But they had a champion. The Young Feller, sitting aloft, a dozen times voiced their complaint.

"Yes," he began, with his high whine of protest, "it's all daggone nice for the rich. Daggone nice for the rich, I'm sure, a-settin' aroun' their blazing fireplaces an' soaking their noses in champagne all night long an' crackin' off ten dollar bills like they was cigarette papers. Oh, of course. 'Come right in and bring your nice present with you, Ike,' and 'Thank you; tha-a-ank you'"—he meowed it—"an' they'd think different if they only knew the sufferin' of them pore hosses and us pore delivery boys out in this awful cold, workin' sixteen hours a day, and slippin' an' slidin' on the ice an' apt to break our legs any minute—"

"You aint apt to break yours—unless you go fallin' off," corrected Ike.

"Horses knows what Christmas means," pursued the Young Feller, sticking to safer ground. "Look at them pore, sufferin' creatures."

A horse always seems to know when you are talking about him. At any rate, Bob purposely made a frightful straddle and almost broke a strap.

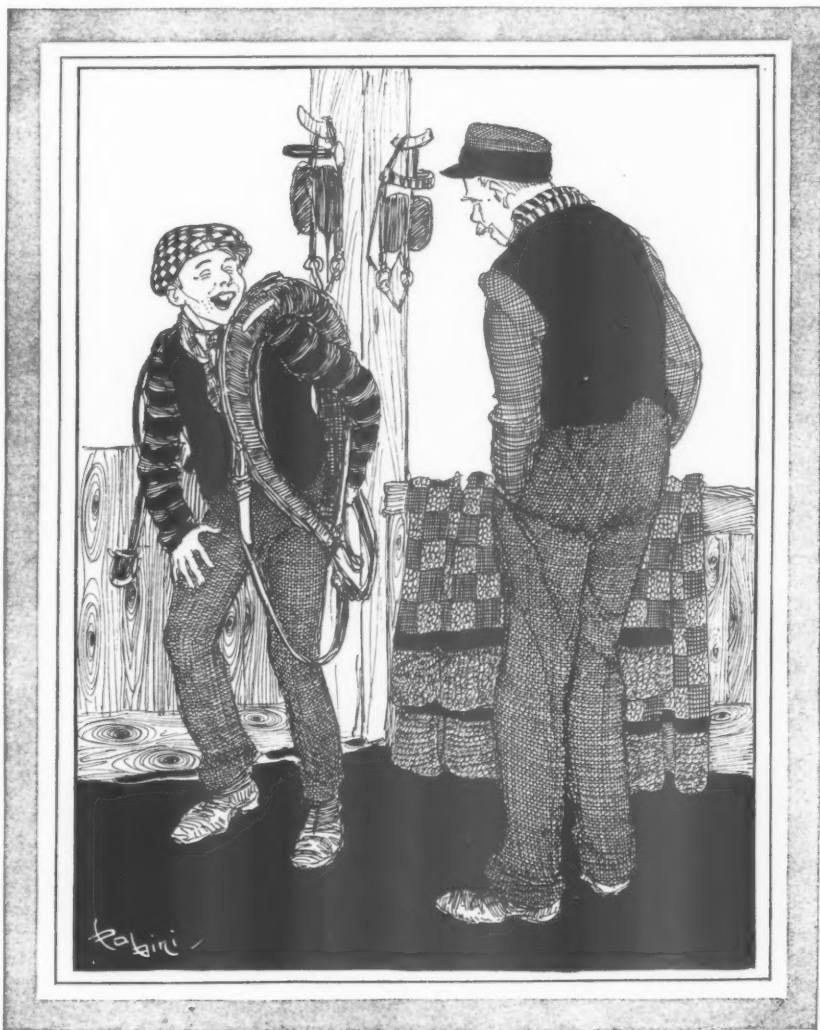
"Looky at that now," cried the Young Feller. "Lord, if we ever git out o' this

alive, I'll never take another Christmas wagon out."

"Ike is a-takin' this one out," said Ike.

"I expect to be froze stiff an' carried

"Yes, stir 'em now while you can," said the Young Feller. "Like as not you'll have a bullet in your head afore midnight. Merry Christmas!"



"The matter is, sir, that you're a gentleman, sir."

to a hospital when I get back. If we ever do git back to the stable," the Young Feller added thoughtfully.

"Stir them stumps," called Ike to the horses.

THE cold had finally taken His Lordship; he was drowsy and slow. Sweat after sweat had come out of his skin, dried there, been frozen there; only to make way, in a thaw, for more sweat.

He strained mechanically at his tugs, knowing from of old that if he kept to his steady pace he could last until he got to the stable. Bob, with lid drooped over his eye, took in the situation of his teammate. Thoughtfully he soldiered along, in the approved fashion. If His Lordship saw fit to go slow, so much the better for Bob.

But Bob too was cold; and he was hungry and tired. He was so tired that he believed—well, if they ever were fools enough to let him lie down in that stable they would never get him up for a week. He slowly formulated a grand plan. He would get so lazy and so stupid and so pokey that they would decide he was no longer any good for the express business. And then some hostler with a discerning eye would notice what a fine cob he would make for a rich old lady's four-wheeler—and he would be removed far, far away from all Christmas work. He would be in that blissful job where he would never even know when Christmas time came around.

By the bones of his daddy, but he hated Christmas! He hated Christmas and Christmas gifts and express wagons which lugged around Christmas gifts—from the frog of his left hind hoof to the frozen tip of his right ear he hated and despised and abominated and loathed the whole confounded idea of Christmas! By the milk of his mother, he was done with express companies!

The wind, a northern murderer with gritted teeth, plunged his cold sword into the soft, exposed muscles of Bob's chest; and Bob shivered and rolled his eyes desperately at His Lordship. That dreary old professional—evidently a horse without a soul—slapped onward apathetically. What could Bob do to him? Nothing. He simply didn't have the spirit left to show his resentment. But all the same a fierce idea for the moment fascinated him: to take hold of the old duffer's snoot with his teeth—and see how much of it would come off.

Ike, up behind, kept up his jovial carol about the rolling Jordan and his post mortem determination in regard to it. He didn't try to push the horses. It was past eleven and there were but few more deliveries to make. In his trousers'

pocket, warm against his leg, lay a chunky roll of small bills. His tips came nearly to seventy dollars.

Slap, slap-slap-slap; slap, slap, slap, went the horses' hooves.

"'y Jimmy!" declared Ike, breaking off his song. "Ketch that there, young feller. What the hosses is a-playin' on the asphalt." He cocked his ear; and then, sawing his free hand in the air, accompanied the noise with vocal melody:

I'm *Cap-tin* Jinks of the Hoss Marinks,
I feeds my hosses on *corn* and beans
I *knows* that it's *beyond* the means
Of a guy on a *express* wagon....

"Beyond my means, is it?" He slapped his trousers' pocket heartily. "Not with many more a Christmas Eve it aint. Hey, young feller? Merry Christmas, you!"

Out of the bundle of the other came the old whine. "Merry icicles, you'd better say. I'll be a corp afore we get back. I know I will. . . 'stead of holdin' hands with my girl, as I should be, like a free-born American, I'm up here a-slavin' in the cold. An' I don't get nothin' for it, neither. . . . That's what comes of associatin', though, with a feller that calls hisself a daggone Socialist."

Ike was silent for a long while, in solemn thought, but his reflections had nothing to do with the empty chatter of the Young Feller. He started to speak several times; then gave it up, approaching once, however, a state of semi-strangulation, and stirred restlessly on his seat.

"What I'm tryin' to git at is this," he burst out at last, as if he had been talking all the while: "No feller 'at reely loves hosses likes to see a Christmas come around with icy streets. Leastaways, not in the express business. You ask a man that's driv horses. . . . I mean a man with any feelin's in him. I guess I've driv and got so I knowed particler well a hundred hosses in my time. . . . well, sixty, anyways. And I never had to push 'em out over icy streets but what every slip they'd make it felt to me like my own foot'd slipped; and every time one of 'em fell down. . . . well, 'y gonnies, I'd rather a thousan' times I'd fell myself. An' the times a feller has a-gittin' the pore scared devils up! 'y Jimmy, it's

hard to handle a hoss right away; but on these here icy streets! I fer one wont be sorry to see the day come when they'll send out these whachacall ortermobile trucks as soon as they spy the ice."

"An' that'd knock *you* out o' yer precious job," said the Young Feller with a relish.

"Yep; I'd stick to the hosses. I'm too old to learn new tricks. But there'll always be a job in hosses. The day'll never come when a man can git along without a hoss. There's too much mixed up between 'em...like a man and a dog. If he *could* git along without 'em, he wouldn't. You can't go runnin' out human nature with a lot o' plumbin' and a can o' gasoline."

Wherewith Ike drew up and made his last delivery of the night.

"Jimminy, it must be late. I had to git the servants up in there," he remarked as he came back. Then, looking at his watch: "Holy smoke, it's a quarter past twelve. What'll my old woman say?"

"Since it's Christmas day now," observed the Young Feller, "like as not she'll say 'Merry Christmas!' It's a habit that seems to be growin'."

"An' all the other routes have come in by now," said Ike. "We'll be the last in."

IT was a weary three-quarters of an hour, that journey back to the stable. Ike had seldom seen horses so thoroughly spent as were His Lordship and Bob.

His Lordship, though he did not know it (and did not care), had just about finished his last year in that service. In spite of his resolute, stout heart and his mute, uncomplaining tongue, he was getting old...too old. Even with the now empty wagon he staggered a little. His sight swam, dizzied by the cold and the exertion. Though his wind wasn't broken, he breathed hard, with the faintest suggestion of a whistle in his throat. Poor old Lordship—with little but dignity, and dignity of no avail—he would soon be sold into viler bondage; the descent of his slavery was before him.

With Bob there was a heartiness, a vigor about his very grumbling...like that of a man fervently swearing and making up gaudy oaths. His stomach was empty and he felt dirty and sticky from

the icy sweat. From the knuckles of his knees down, he seemed paralyzed; his flanks ached like burns from the constant slipping and catching himself. He had wrenched his muscles until they were on fire. His mouth was dry as flour. His eyes started from his head, with the ceaseless neck-strain of bucking into his collar for sixteen solid hours. "Except in cases of emergency"—such as Christmas Eve—he would never have been used thus. But this was an emergency. So Bob thought of all life as an emergency and cursed, cursed, cursed the day he was born.

Slap—curse; *slap*—curse; *slap*—curse.

His rage, his anger, his meanness and sullenness increased with every step nearer the stable. He had his fair share of bull-headed obstinacy when he set his mind to it; and the quiet devil of viciousness was in him for the labor they had put upon him that day. He could kick the life out of Ike; he could bite the hand off of the Young Feller; he could—

But what was that?

So help him Bob, if an amazing whinny hadn't come out of the depths of His Lordship! Then he looked up.

At once they both fell to pawing at the fluted threshold of the door. Ike, aloft, stood up and roared: "Ho, you, in there!"

The door of the stable rolled swiftly back in its groove.

Presto! The glorious change of scene! The mellow light from within shone radiantly out; the pleasant warmth rolled out to them in billows. The people inside yelled and cheered the frozen late-comers. Ike for very joy boomed out:

I'se gwine to go to hebben when I die,
To hear sweet Jordan roll—

and the team plunged into the cozy indoor's heat.

The gleeful cries mingled; everybody was calling out in happy confusion: "Merry Christmas—Merry Christmas—Same to you—Ho, folks!—Hello, Daddy—Merry Christmas!—Ike at last!—Wasn't you cold?—Whoa there, Bob—Hi, Your Lordship!"

There was Ike's wife—and Ike's little youngster, the Nipper, dancing in half-mad glee, getting under the horses' dancing hooves trying to climb up the wagon wheel.

"Yea, ho! 'y the eternal gonies, Merry Christmas to you all!" sang out Ike again, tumbling down with a grin on his ruddy face.

"Ike!" cried his wife as he crushed her in against his ulster and kissed her with a smack.

"Daddy! Daddy! Murry Christmas, Daddy!" chanted the Nipper. He was caught up and held wriggling high over Ike's head.

"What're you a-doin' here? You ought to be a-bed dreamin' of Santy Claus' whiskers," declared Ike.

His wife explained. "I got worried. You was so late, Ike. So we thought we'd better come down here and wait for you."

The Young Feller descended and was helping the night watchman unhitch. There was no one else in the place.

"Git into your quilts, you old sojer," cried the Young Feller, giving Bob a cheery smack on the flank. "Blow out yer candle and say nighty-night."

Bob was turned into his roomy box stall, His Lordship into his. Bob poked around a bit, his nose whimpering in a sort of ecstasy.

Oh, the sweet warm smell of a clean stable on a bitter wintry night! The crisp hay, cut in the green of its pride, with all the milky juices of earth's bosom still in it, has an aroma more precious than the rarest of perfumes—and here it is, piled manger-high for Bob to push about with his velvety lips. The grain itself, the oats and the bran, have their appetizing odor—of a redolent, bulging old granary under a harvest sun. The horses of the other team, exuding the lovable smell and jolly warmth of clean animals, give the right feeling of companionship, safe and cozy against the storm outside.... Thank the good Lord, thought Bob, that he was at home again, at last, in his own stable, in his own stall, as a decent horse should be, protected by his rights and privi-

leges! He nickered a bit and began rooting around, too nervous to settle down. He just wanted to feel the heat come in again and make his blood pound him



His Lordship stood stock still, letting himself soak in the thawing air.

drowsily to sleep. His Lordship, too, stood stockstill, letting himself soak in the thawing air.

But what is Ike doing, watching the Young Feller so furtively? The Young Feller, with the harness over his shoulder, disappears into the harness room. This is Ike's chance to do it on the quiet. He steps quickly after him, gets him in a corner, slips something into his hand.

"Here, Young Feller," he whispers hoarsely, "step out with *her* to-morrow and see a show."

"Why, Mister Stacey!" exclaims the Young Feller, in pleased astonishment. He unrolls the crumpled thing.

It is Missis Van Twiller's ten-dollar bill.

The Young Feller is affected to the point of etiquette. Ike watches him with twinkling eyes of anticipation. He hangs up the harness, brushes both of his hands on the sides of his overcoat, and solemn-

ly approaches. He shakes Ike even more solemnly by the hand, without saying a word. And then he backs off, with cavernous, wide, respectful eyes, bowing repeatedly as he backs, the picture of gravity and decorum.

Ike lets out a roar of laughter. "What's—what's the matter, young feller?" he gasps.

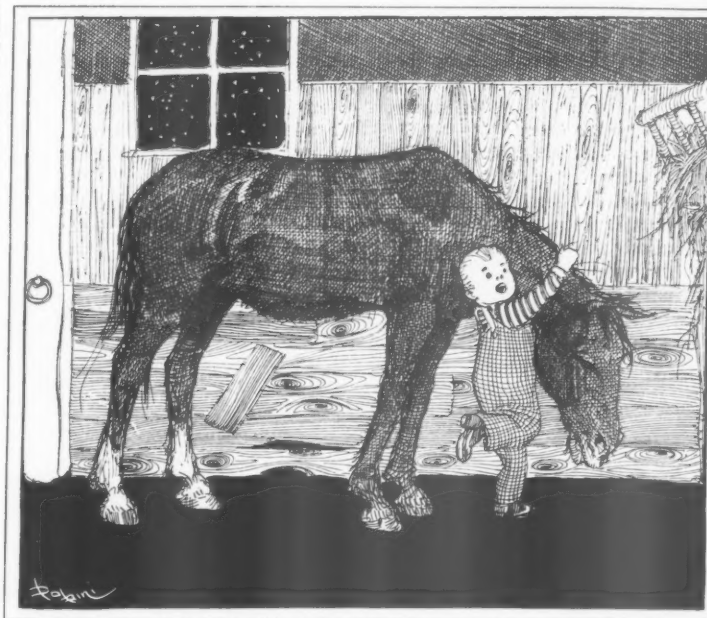
"The matter is, sir, that you're a gentleman, sir," is the austere response.

"*In* a Socialist?" insists Ike, grinning.

"No, sir. Didn't I just git through sayin' you was a *gentleman*?"

But the racket of a little demon, gone wild with the joy of the occasion, interrupts them. The Nipper is running amuck around Ike's legs, yelling at the top of his shrill voice:

"Daddy, Daddy! Listen, Daddy! Listen! Hi, hi, hi, Daddy, listen to what I got! Listen to what I got!"



"Daddy! I'm huggin' Bob around the neck!"

"In the name o' Bedlam what *have* you got?" asks Ike, catching him by the ear.

The Nipper holds up a paper bag.

"I got a Chrismus present for the hor-sies! That's what I've got. I got a Chrismus present for the hor-sies, I have! A Chrismus present for the horsies!" he chants as he dances up and down.

"Fer the hosses!" says Ike, in mock chagrin. "An' where's mine? Who cares for the old hosses? Where's my present? That's what I want to know."

"Tell Daddy his is at home waiting to warm his feet," admonishes the Nipper's mother.

"Yours is at home," obeys the Nipper, "waitin' to warm your feet. But see what I got for the hor-sies! See what I brung the hor-sies!"

Ike opens the bag. "Carrots, 'y gon-nies! Carrots in the dead o' winter, right out o' Santy Claus' own bin down cellar! Just you step in, Nipper, and tell 'em you're Santy and feed 'em yourself. They wont bite you. Go on in there with 'im."

His Lordship, like a gentlemanly old animal, gravely takes his share and begins munching in a matter-of-fact way. If they care to give him these delicacies, he is much obliged to them.

But in a minute there come screams from Bob's stall:

"Hey, Daddy, Bob's a-snooterin' me! He's a-snooterin' me with his nose and a-pushin' me all around his stall!"

"That's his way o' tellin' you he's glad an' that he likes you," calls Ike, over his wife's shoulder. "Give 'im his carrots, why don't you?"

"Does he love me, Daddy?" The little figure stands staring in doubt. "Does Bob love me?"

"Sure, he do."

"Well, if the ol' monkey'll just stop snooterin' I'll give him his present then." A silence. "There, now," says a subdued young voice, "there's *all* of 'em. Now, Bob, listen; you've got to gimme a hug. Daddy! I'm huggin' Bob around the neck! He's lettin' me hug him around the neck, Bob is, an' he feels so nice an' soft!"

"You git down out of that manger an' come here," commands Ike.

Bob, if he could talk the language of men, would say: "Aw, Ike, let him stay here awhile and visit with me." But of course he can't. So he fills his jaw chuck full of great, rich, red, juicy carrot and he brings his strong teeth down through it again and again with gusto, for the mere feel of the bite of the thing is delicious; and as he munches away at the luscious roots and gets all that smacking tang and flavor out of them, he forgets all about the cruel night outside, and the hatred he had of the express company; all about the back-breaking labor he had been through; all about his determination to be a good-for-nothing lazy old cob. Why not be an up-and-doing, express-wagon-rustling horse-of-the-world?

And so he pokes his head across into His Lordship's stall and, with the carrot chunks dropping out of the over-full corners of his mouth, he remarks in a soft and casual way:

"Say, old friend, Christmas aint so bad after all, is it?"



A COMPLETE RÉSUMÉ OF THE OPENING INSTALLMENTS OF "EMPTY POCKETS"

EMPTY POCKETS" is a daring uncovering of life secrets, a great human story of the people and customs of this country that looms up with the work of Dickens or Hugo.

It is built around the life of a profligate New York millionaire, "Merry Perry" Merithew, and his effect on five young women; Aphra Shaler, the little pig who brought herself to the New York market; Maryla Sokalska, born after her parents' flight from Russian Poland; Red Ida, a pick-pocket; a girl from the Middle West, who ran away from her parents rather than go back with them; and Muriel Schuyler, the beautiful young aristocrat, whom twenty years of luxury could not spoil.

"Merry Perry" loathed his East Side neighbors, the empty-pocketed poor. He always said the New York slums was the last place on earth where he would be found. It was. He was found there dead one morning, grasping in his stained hands eight fine strands of a woman's copper-colored hair.

Immediately began the hunt for the woman whose tell-tale hair would expose her as the last companion of the dead rōu. Hallard, a reporter, struck first for Aphra Shaler, the last, best known recipient of Merry Perry's princely support. He found Aphra ready for flight, her copper-colored locks of the day before bleached to ash. Before he could stop her, she was gone, flinging behind her the taunt, "Look up Muriel Schuyler. He liked her, and she has copper-colored wool."

IT was true that the "busy little humming bird," Merry Perry, had known the lovely girl, Muriel Schuyler. One day, a year before his death, her automobile struck a crippled newsboy. That was the beginning of a day which introduced the carefree girl to the most fascinating and dangerous fop of her world and to a terrible understanding of what empty pockets means to both the rich and the poor.

Muriel worked over the stunned boy, till Dr. Clinton Worthing, a young ambulance surgeon, arrived. He was more interested in the attractive Muriel than in the newsboy, "Happy," and promises to aid her in proceeding to have the crippled child made well.

The boy's tenement home was a revelation to Muriel. A poor Italian mother on the floor below was mourning over her baby boy, kidnapped and held for a

ransom of five thousand dollars. Unless the ransom was paid the boy was to be cut in pieces. Muriel promised she would return with the five thousand. She got into her car, only to meet a Russian girl, seemingly insane, who was being taken from her parents to be deported. Their heartrending cries compelled Muriel to stop and promise she would keep the poor girl from being sent back to the horrors of Russia, if she had to go to the President to do it. Then she made for her father's office to get the ransom money.

Merry Perry Merithew was there before her to borrow five thousand dollars from her father to pay a blackmailer. Muriel demanded her five thousand and, to her horror, her father refused. But the sentimental Merithew was in tears at her story. He increased his request to ten thousand, and promised her five if he got it. Muriel's father refused Merithew and took Muriel back to their summer home. There Merithew phoned her that night that he had finally borrowed his ten thousand and would give her half if she would come over to the yacht club and give him one dance.

With palpitating heart she went—and was discovered receiving the money by one of Merithew's intimates, "Pet" Bet-tany.

WORTHING opened negotiations for payment of the Italian boy's ransom for Muriel and helped her to intercede for the girl about to be deported. After a talk with the girl's mother, Dr. Worthing got the girl detained as probably not insane but suffering from ill treatment.

"There's one Russian officer I'd like to vivisect," Dr. Worthing told the Government Commissioner.

Muriel went back to the East Side with the good news for the girl's sorrowing father. There began her friendship for Maryla Sokalska, a "pants finisher," a beautiful Russian girl with copper hair like her own. Muriel, full of pity for the slaving Maryla, got her a position with her exclusive dressmaker, where Maryla was to make what seemed riches to her by just walking about showing wonderful gowns. Muriel's father, fearful of the results of her excursions, whisked her away for a cruise. She was practically a prisoner on his luxurious yacht.

Meantime, Maryla's work brings her under the eyes of "Merry Perry," who goes to the dressmaker's to buy gowns for Aphra Shaler. The profligate sees her dreamy beauty there and covets it.

EMPTY

THE NOVEL OF NEW YORK WHICH

By Rupert Hughes

Author of "What Will People Say?"

Note: A complete résumé of the open-

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN women decided that the highest art is the concealment of nature, it was as long a step from animaldom as when men learned to make weapons. It meant that the human hide should no longer be a pelt, that it should not be blistered by the sun, scratched by briars, calloused and warted from cave floors. It should become itself the finest fabric of all the looms. It should be revealed only in spots and glimpses. Gradually costume, which began as an advertisement of sex, was to develop like poster art to such a point that it concealed what it was supposed to recommend. Gradually costume ceased to be a device to attract the men's eyes away from other women, and grew to be a campaign to attract the eyes of other women and poison them with envy, though it bankrupted the men.

The enormity of this traffic brought such men as Dutilh into big commercial importance, and brought such girls as Maryla opportunities to act as living show-counters.

Maryla Sokalska had spent her life in such drudgery, in such squalor, at such close quarters with starvation that she had been hardly more than a sleek and dim-eyed mole burrowing in the ground incessantly for food enough to go on burrowing. Then she was haled up into the full noon sun and given eyes and understanding. And now she was scuttering back to the old mole-hole. Small

wonder if it seemed unbeautiful.

Her people were not born sempsters. The grandfather was shortsighted and asthmatic, and his sewing accomplished little more than to keep him out of an old man's mischief. Adam, the father, was tireless—rather, he was always tired, yet unresting. He had meant to be a rabbi, but a Russian pogrom drove him in poverty to America, and he never got back to his books. He was born to be a scholar, and he read nothing but seams. Rosa, the mother, was all thumbs, and forever undoing what she had done, forever breaking needles: Dosia, the big little fat sister, was lazy and incompetent; she had two passions, food and play, and she got little of either.

Maryla would have been skillful enough as a lace maker or broiderer, but she abominated the manufacture of overalls for workmen. Pasinski, the boarder, was a dreamer and so deeply in love with Maryla that his eyes were usually on her instead of the needle, and his feet were always pausing on the treadle for long periods of adoration.

That was why the Sokalskis were poor; they were doing cheap work without affection for it, and the world has

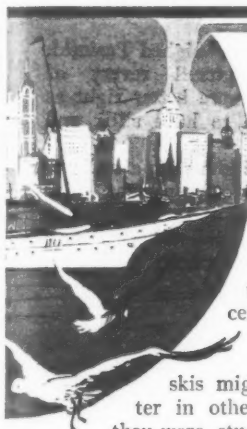


POCKETS

EVERY AMERICAN WILL WANT TO READ

Illustrated by
James Montgomery Flagg

ing of "Empty Pockets" is on page 251.



never paid well for that—a n d never will—except for some merchandise o f stories, s o n g s a n d pictures, and even in the worst of t h e s e there must be sincerity to make them salable.

All of the Sokalskis might have done better in other fields; but here they were, stuck in this stubble—and no way out. Then the miracle befell them. Maryla had appealed to a passer-by to lend aid in the desperate plight of the Balinskis, and the passer-by happened to be Muriel Schuyler, and she had been amused to take Maryla on a visit uptown, to show her shop-windows and her own mansion and her own incredible wardrobe. Finally she had planted Maryla in a position with one of the most expensive of dressmakers.

To Maryla the whole adventure would have been a mere fantastic dream, if it were not for the reality of the taxicab carrying her home. The jolts and jounces of that magic carpet would have knocked any dreamer out of bed.

AS Maryla returned, sliding backward from Paradise, after a peek in at the doors, she hated her old environment the more furiously, the nearer she

approached it. She hated poverty above all crimes and misfortunes, because it involved the final disgrace of being dowdy.

She hurried up the steps of her own tenement so dreadingly that when she threw open the door, she had to fall back against it panting and holding her heart in her left hand.

The vision of her caused dismay among the sewing machinists. They checked their treadles and stared over their shoulders like a platoon of bicyclists.

Pasinski rose with such alarm that he knocked over his chair:

"Maryla, what you got now?" he cried, "a heart disease?"

"A job!" she panted. "I got a grand job by rich dressmakers. I am a model."

There was a beatitude upon her face that illumined all the others by reflection. Her father smiled to see her smile; then he asked cautiously:

"Models? Vat for a bitsness it is, dose models?"

Maryla explained the magic trade:

"Miss Schuyler takes me by Mr. Dutilh. He works by dresses and hats. She says, 'Give my friend a job sewing.' He says, 'You are too pretty, my dear, to make dresses. You should wear them.' So I'm goin' to put on dresses and show them off to fi-in ladies and if they like, they buy them off me; if they don't like, I take off and put on another dress yet. All day I am putting on and taking off fi-in garments."

Adam scented danger in the enterprise. His daughter was to be hired for her beauty, not for her craft or industry. It looked perilous. He said:

"That models is not a bitsness: it is a foolitsness."

"Oh, Papa!" she groaned. It was sacrilege to be skeptical of such a heaven.

"How viel geld you get by soch a fectory!"

"Twelve dollars a week, Papa!"

"Zwölf dollars in one week!" gasped Adam. She nodded her head vigorously, and he protested: "Dot is not a bitsness; it is a schwindlie. All of us here dun't got zwölf dollars a week. How should you got it?"

Then he eyed her with sudden suspicion; a crafty look went slowly across his face; his lips parted, baring a big rectangular smile and he reached out to tweak her cheek:

"Ach, du kleine! she's choking!"

"No, Papa, no!" she insisted. "I got a fine job."

Finally she convinced him that manna and quails still fell from heaven even through ceilings. With some misgivings he consented that she should be permitted to take the position, provided she came straight home evenings and brought home all of her money. To this she answered:

"Of course! What you think I am?"

She was so happy that she kissed her father and resumed her work at the sewing machine.

Her feet plied the treadles with enthusiasm. She was like a young girl that runs across a meadow whispering a song into the breeze.

Pasinski, watching her, shook his head. She was running away too fleetly for his pursuit.

By and by Dosia murmured:

"Say, Maryla."

"Yes."

"What's a swell house like? What's Miss Schuyler's house like?"

"Like the new schoolhouse only with foiniture and silk rugs. And an elevator it's got."

"Elevators is a factory," sniffed Dosia, who was far too wise to be duped. Maryla insisted:

"They have a elevator in their house, and stairs, too—marble—really marble. And tea I had, too."

"Humph! We got tea here!"

"Not such a tea like this Miss Schuyler has."

"Did the lady cook it herself and is the stove all over with solid gold?"

"No! She cooks nothing. Ladies don't cook. She has two gentlemen that make the tea and bring it in—two big fallers like policemen, only one is in a full dress suit. And everything is silver but only the cups. My cup was like silk, like silk with starch into it. I could see my fingers through it."

"Sillik and silliver!" sighed Pasinski, studying the enraptured reverry of Maryla. "You got more better right as those Schuyler girl to have sillik and silliver."

Maryla rewarded him with a smile of gratitude for his discernment. But Adam glared at him and motioned him to keep silence. He did not want such ideas put into Maryla's head. As if they were not already there!

II

THE next morning there was nearly as much flutter about getting the daughter of the house ready for the new job as if she were a regiment marching off to war. When the mobilizing of Maryla was accomplished they all wept over her, her father most bitterly.

She was so beautiful to him that he was afraid of her beauty and for it. He held her in his arms and kissed her forehead. His beard was bedabbled with his tears. It was thrilling to make her father cry. Pasinski's tears did not get beyond his eyelashes. He wanted her and could not buy her and now she was to be put in the show window. Dosia and her mother wept with pride. Maryla kissed them all good-by except Pasinski, who would have relished it most of all.

It was lonely at home that day. All the eyes had a way of reverting to the sewing machine. It looked forlorn without Maryla there in the attitude that was almost as permanent as the outline of the window or the fire-escape. Several times she was spoken to and it was strange that

she did not answer. Now the simmering quartette of machines was only a trio and made a diminished music. The canary bird chirped repeatedly and cocked his head waiting for Maryla to chirp back at him. Dosia tried to take her place, but the imitation did not satisfy that exacting little yellow critic. The very geranium missed Maryla. Dosia forgot to water it and it drooped with the rest of the family. At length Adam broke out:

"Zwölf dollars is big money, but better I like to have my Maryla as twenty dollars."

Rosa tried to console him and herself:

"She comes home soon, Papa. Ve got her here by eveninks. Ve hear her sewink machine soon."

As the afternoon wore into evening, alarm replaced loneliness. There were such countless dangers in the streets and she had gone so far north!

At half past six she came home, and was greeted like an Arctic explorer escaped after a year in the ice floes. They felt a certain constraint in her manner, but it was forgotten in the general celebration. She forgot it herself in the excitement of telling her wonderful experiences among the people who dwelt on the opposite side of the looking glass.

First she must lift her hat and show off her hair. It had been elaborately coiffed. Rosa and Dosia shrieked with admiration. Pasinski felt, but did not say, that it had brought out an unsuspected sensuousness in all her mien. Adam was disgusted and frightened. It was not respectable. He turned his eyes away like a son of Noah.

Strange, that the arrangement this way or that of the excrescent skeins on one's head should assume such spiritual importance; that one's judgment of another's soul should be influenced by the point at which he draws the comb to part his hair, or the spots at which she places her hairpins and establishes loops and ringlets!

Maryla saw her father averting his gaze from her shame. She explained:

"Mr. Dutilh made me have it so. It makes the dresses look better."

"It iss not de-sint," groaned Adam.

Rosa tried to reassure him, but he began to work again hopelessly. Relieved of his woeful eyes, Maryla brightened again and lifted her skirts to show that her stockings were of silk. She motioned Pasinski's eyes away and revealed to the enraptured women that she had linen wear of extraordinary aristocracy, and she made them feel along her sleek sides where the new corset, the astonishing envelope the women clamped themselves into in the fall of 1913, did its best to conform her anatomy to the shape of a cigar—bust, waist, hips, all merged as far as possible in one smooth cylinder.

"Shoes, too, I got, with heels so high. I leave those by Dutilh's."

The appalling cost of all these things implied a mortgage on her earnings for life, but she explained that Mr. Dutilh had furnished them as part of her equipment, for the sake of Miss Schuyler.

She described the gowns she wore, in details that were gibberish to the men, and set the women squealing with vivid envy. Adam was more interested in the prices till she told him that she had worn and had seen sold one gown that brought four hundred and twenty-five dollars and consisted of next to nothing.

Adam was aghast at the price, but more aghast at the omissions. He hated to think of Maryla in it—or out of it. She laughed at him and told him that one of the city's noblest ladies had bought it to wear at the opera. The old man blushed deep into his beard.

"I don't like you should be in soch a place. It is goot you come home eveninks by de family."

And now the cause of Maryla's constraint appeared.

"That's one trouble, Papa. I can't live at home."

He looked as if he could not have heard her right. She explained:

"This morning Mr. Dutilh talks to me and he says, 'I should have your name and address, my dear'—he calls everybody 'my dear.' And I says, 'Orchard Street,' and he says 'Where is that at? Brooklyn?' And I tell him where it is and he says, 'My God,'—always he



To Maryla's horror she saw that Perry had not tucked his napkin under his chin, but had set it on his knee. As she saw a knife and fork, and she corrected her own attack. She began to criss-cross cut her lettuce to mimic him, but the lettuce was elusive and she had to



cretly as she could she drew hers from her throat and folded it back and put it on her lap. He parted his chicken with tuce with her knife and fork till she saw that he dispensed with the knife. Then she hunt it all across her plate and over the edge and back again.

says that—"you live down there in those sloms? If my customers know you live there and wear their clothes they never buy. They come never near again." And he says, "It's too bad!" So I says, "All right, I go. I'm sorry. What should I tell Miss Schuyler?" Then he jumps and he says, "My God, I can't throw you out like that. All you must do is to move uptown. You get a room up here." So I must. But I will come home Sundays—and often evenings."

There it was! There was the bomb-shell that wrecks the home. The daughter was already lured from the shelter; she would fare the crowded ways alone. She would become like these modernized unbelieving Jewesses, the "taytschke," who eat anything, kosher or not, who do not observe the rites, believe the belief, or follow the path of esteem.

Adam's heavy brows met in a frown of meditation. Money was much but not everything.

With graver majesty than one would have expected, and with deep conviction of duty, Adam made the decision; renounced that wealth of twelve dollars a week and commanded Maryla to give up the Dutill's post and stay home at the machine. She stared at him in alarm: "Papa, you don't mean it."

"I mean it!" he said. "I have decidet."

Obediently she dropped to her place. Her feet like hack-horses under the lash began to climb the same old hill. She sewed, but with smoldering sullenness that showed itself in her anger at the needle and her brutality toward the helpless fabric.

Nobody was happy. Rosa and Dosia would lose the pleasant prospect of hearing every night the report of a spy from the land of milk and honey. Adam must break his child's heart and deny her her profitable happiness in order to save her from perdition. But he felt that any weaker resolve would be treachery to his daughter, and his faith and his conscience.

They all sewed on in the feeble light while the clamor of the idling crowds in the streets clattered at the window. They worked till they fell asleep at their machines, and stumbled to bed.

They did not sleep long and they were awake and at work betimes again.

The morning was heart-breaking to Maryla. She fell out of a cloud-bed of dreams upon the rough granite of reality. In her dreams she had been promenading with satin and ermine and silver brocade about her. She woke in a crowded, cot-filled dormitory that was soon a breakfast room and later a workshop peopled by haggard fags who seemed rather to be dragged on after their machines than to be driving them.

It was a grim and odious present with no future. But what else was there for her to do? A girl had to obey her father.

Suddenly she remembered Muriel. Muriel had treated her great, wealthy, well-dressed father like a querulous child, disobeyed him and laughed at him. Maryla could not laugh at her solemn father, but she could at least defy him. There was still time to reach Dutill's for the day. She made up her mind. She stopped the machine, snapped the thread, folded the completed trouser-leg, carried it to the stack—then, confronted her father:

"Papa, I'm goin' woik by Mr. Dutill's. I'm not goin' woik here any more. I come to see you, but never any more will I sew pents, all the time."

Adam was thunderstruck. This was mutiny. This was America. This was Yankee corruption invading his patriarchy. This was worth stopping the machine for.

Adam rose from his place. He did not rise very high. He was short and his knees were bent from his everlasting crouch, but he seemed as tall as Joshua bidding the sun stand still upon Gibeon. All the majesty he had was his authority and the ancient traditions back of it. But Maryla was born in a country where the sun does not stand still, where the tradition is that tradition shall not rule.

"Maryla!" he thundered, raising his awful forefinger, "you dun't leaf dis ho'se! You hear? You dun't go!"

She answered in mild, meek, frightened tones, but her heart was adamant:

"Yes, Papa, I do go, and I ask you please, don't make an excitement."

"An excidement, she says!" he roared. "She says 'Dun't make an excidement,' and she spits in my beard; she goes to voik by dose *Goyim*! I am no more her fadder. My home iss not goot *genug* for such a fine lady like her."

From the next room the sick and wounded Balinski called aloud in fright: "*Was ist's—was ist's? Bitte!*"

For his sake they lowered their voices. Americanism was infecting Adam too. He was defied and he could not strike. He hated his weakness but he could only make idle threats in whispers:

"Maryla, if you go, you neffer come beck!"

"All right, Papa. Just as you say. But I got to go. I got to get some life. I got to see something besides this sewing machine; and you got a right to help me."

"I got a right to keep you a goot gerl, dat is all."

"I can be good. I will be good."

"You begin to be goot by to mock your fadder. You are bat already. For pretty dresses, and sillik stockinks girls go on de street yet."

"Papa! You should not make such a words. Dosia is here," Rosa protested, frantic at seeing her husband at war with their child.

But Adam was sustained by a sense of duty to his family and his creed. He dreaded the look in his daughter's face. He could not stoop to beg her to stay at home. He had nothing to bribe her with except a reward of merit for abject obedience. She dreaded to be late to Dutilh's, and at the height of his Jeremiad she was pushing a hatpin through her hair. It was a hatpin of odd design. During her father's peroration on the fate of girls who leave home, Maryla kissed her mother and her sister good-by, and put out her arms to her father. He declined the salute. She opened the door with a fluent sinuousness, moved round it and was gone. The door closed after her softly, like the cover of a finished book.

Adam dropped to his sewing machine, and motioned the others to theirs. He seemed, to himself at least, to be sewing his own grave clothes, his

tachrichim—and they were stained with the sin of the child entrusted to him. For the sins of the children are visited also on the parents.

Rosa wept miserably and so did Dosia. At length Adam ordered them to be silent. So obedient they were that they ceased to lament audibly. But they shook their heads with dolor, and silent tears slid off their cheeks.

III

YOUNG runaways do not suffer like old left-at-homes. Maryla's gloom rose from her like a black fog as she hurried down the steps. The noisy, smelly street made a racket that was pleasant as a thing to escape. The street-car on the Bowery came up like a chariot. She was smiling with such anticipation that the conductor grinned and called her "kiddo." She administered a stinging rebuke: "You needn't get so fresh!"

Northward the car groaned, swerved into Fourth Avenue, and emerged from the tunnel at the doorstep of the great Grand Central Station that led to unimaginable Ispahans and Thules. Then the car wore round into Madison Avenue, a canyon of marvelous hotels and shops.

Maryla took on dignity and aristocracy with distance, and pressed the button to stop the car as if she were summoning a butler. She brushed the conductor with a glance like the flick of a contemptuous fan, and he said respectfully:

"Mind the step, lady."

She marched across to Fifth Avenue and into Dutilh's with the stride of one going there to buy instead of to sell. Once within, her soul plummeted to the depths of meekness.

She was afraid of her ignorances, so many ignorances of so many things. She was afraid even to talk. Yesterday she had overheard one of the models mimicking her speech. It is a strange experience to see oneself imitated, and Maryla did not relish it. She determined to reform her dialect at once. Her quick ear told her that she had been putting the umlaut over the English *a* and changing it to a short

e, as in "understand." She found that she had caught a trick of prepositions from her foreign-born parents and made too liberal a use of *by*. She could not change the habit of years at once, and she blushed at her relapses with the shame of a cockney hearing another *h* let slip. But a quick ear is half the game.

The other models were the subject of her studies till the customers began to come in. Then she wondered why it was that there was such a difference between the models all dressed up and the most simply clad purchaser; and what the difference was. She was trying to solve the unfathomed mystery of the distinction between ladies and gentlemen and those who are not.

She thought she had it once, when she said to herself that it was the difference between those who were haughty because they came to buy and those who were humble because they were there to sell. But other customers came in who were not ladies for all their wealth and insolence. And Dutilh was not humble though he tried to sell, and he was not insolent for all his impudence. She decided that he was a gentleman or a mixture of gentleman and lady.

She gave up trying to analyze aristocracy but resolved to acquire it. The study of morals engaged her next. Why did she instantly resolve that certain of the girls and certain of the customers were bad women? It was not a matter of beauty or language. One or two were brazen and smoked Dutilh's cigarettes and swore and wanted the lowest cuts in gowns, yet she felt them to be reliable and staunch in honor. Others were shy and sweet and prudish, yet Maryla felt that they were as sly as shy; treacherous, and lovers of the dark. And some were brazen and seemed vicious, and some were shy and seemed innocent. She could make no rules. This uptown world was frightfully complicated.

It was like a voyage to Mars. Everything was different from what she had known. At home everything had been labor on ugly things, penny-squeezing. Here the business of life was wrapping bodies up beautifully. Women talked

of poverty and haggled trying to reduce a gown from two hundred and fifty dollars to one hundred and seventy-five. Maryla's mother had fought the pushcart robbers the same way, but on what different terms!

These women suffered anguishes of choice between shades of color and their marriage. "Is this becoming to me? Does this match my complexion? Does this look as late as that? Is this too extreme? Is that too conservative?"—these were the vital problems, the occasion of sighs and knotted brows and desperate debates. Maryla was utterly bemused.

She had a more immediate problem. Where was she to live? She consulted the other models. She was a foreigner among them. They were as various as womankind and she was afraid of them all. She picked out the most innocent and unassuming of them, a girl called Fay Quincy. Fay's innocence departed when she spoke. Her mouth was cruel and cunning. She sneered at cheap boarding houses, and that afternoon when the shop closed Maryla saw her step into an automobile. She thought she saw a man in it.

The only girl who could help Maryla was one she dared not ask, a great animal of slithy attitudes and scarlet lips. Her name was Elise Addison and she volunteered her information. Elise had just finished a Lilith-like progress on a serpentine course past an equally huge and gaudy woman who had somehow got born into one of the best families. Lilith snaked into the dressing-room like an enchantress and was whipping out of her ophidian gown with an angry:

"My Gawd, that old cat's got me wore out slammin' in and out of duds, and she aint the least notion of buyin' a stitch. Gimme that Paquin thing."

As she worried into that, she heard Maryla rebuffed by a model known as "haughty Hortonse." Elise spoke through a cloud of tulle:

"Say, dearie, I know just the place. It's where I board. Cheap and clean and the grub aint so wise. Try it, anyway."



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

Maryla watched Red Ida with amazement as the little demon leaned against the piano and sang.

Maryla accepted with trepidation, wondering what she would find. She found a poor old landlady with a fanatic kindliness who gave her boarders more than she could afford and was sustained in her poverty by an illusion that she had once known luxury. Elise had a sick mother who kept her straight by the despotism of the feeble.

Maryla's room was only three flights up. It was what is known as a hall bedroom—the end of a narrow hall cut off by a door. The bed, the bureau, a chair and a wardrobe left little room for Maryla; but it was all hers. She did not have to undress as she did at home, using part of her costume as a screen while she removed another part; slipping her nightgown over her head to hide the departure of her skirts. There were no eyes to dodge, no casual glances to dread.

Mr. Pasinski had been considerateness itself, but his very back had seemed to be armed with eyes and there was immodesty in the dread that he might look round although he never did.

Now Maryla had a cell of her own, a door with a lock on it, and the key for herself. She had acquired solitude. That is an epoch-making achievement in any life.

More marvelous still, there was a bathroom next door to Maryla's room. It was not necessary to send the men out to the street when she wanted to climb into the washtub and launder herself. There was a special tub devoted exclusively to bathing. It was so long that one could actually extend oneself outright. And the water was lavishly copious and thrillingly hot unless some of the other boarders beat Maryla to the tub.

She could lie at length in a circumstance of water like a sultana in a marble pool. She seemed to lave her very soul in Narcissal luxury. She was proud to be alive. It was glorious to be rich, to work no more than ten hours a day, to live in a magnificent uptown boarding house's hall bedroom and to bathe oneself every day.

Alas, for human insatiability! Even

this lotos-eater's existence did not bring a permanent contentment. It was rapturous to spend one's days in putting on the finest costumes of the supreme fashion-contrivers. But she could not wear them home. She had to see them sold to other women, or hung up again for to-morrow's sale. Each night she must put off her peacock-feathers and resume her style-less own frock and hat. She must leave Fifth Avenue and traipse down side streets to the penurious block where her boarding house seemed to grow more dismal every day.

Loneliness took an increasing share in her discontent. Everybody else seemed to have some place to go, somebody to call on or somebody coming to call. Maryla was either afraid or disdainful of the boarding house inhabitants. She had no money to spend. She grew fearfully homesick but she could not go home. She had nothing to do but wait till to-morrow brought its own discontents. To fight off the oppression of idle evenings she began to practice the improvement of her speech, erasing her dialect by mimicry. She had an ear for subtleties and she listened all day to talk that was fashionable. She learned to tell the curious differences between women of position and "perfect ladies," the carelessness of those who were sure of themselves and their rank, contrasting with the finikin fussiness of those whose uncertainty of both kept them mincing.

She studied the delicate rhythmical distinction between the manorial freedom of the thoroughbreds and the models who were just a little too graceful to be graceful, and who were too tremendously languid to be quite at ease.

Dutilh watched Maryla with an almost feminine intuition. He saw that she had an instinct for aristocracy of taste and behavior. She learned by imitation with a fierce hunger and a startling speed. Her soul expanded like compressed steam finding a sudden release.

She hastened through all the strata of a girl's transformation into womanhood in a few days. In a few hours she had leapt to the consciousness of beauty and of her own equipment. She realized the powers of womanliness, of

having a self and exploiting it with skill and poise. She grasped the trickery of drapery, the astounding effectiveness of a long plane of unbroken fabric, the implication of a wrinkle that pockets at a curve, the orchestration of colors.

But all this rush of knowledge, this quickened sensitiveness, brought also a quickened need of satisfaction, made denial and privation more bitter.

Her beauty was of the tropic sort, fierce but sad, like the luscious melancholy of a summer afternoon. There was an almost morose rebellion about it. She had the making of one who would never know contentment for more than a little while. She was doomed to passionate longings, frenzies of joy in possession, then speedy weariness, and a sudden infatuation for something else—for something that seemed better because it was beyond.

She had been enraptured at the thought of rest and solitude of evenings.

Already she was tired of her solitude, weary of her boarding house.

The trade of changing her clothes still held her; it had grown indeed upon her, but now her grief was that she could not keep one of the endless series for herself.

Dutilh would lay over her arm a gown that she would have sold her soul for if she could have found a soul-buyer. She would step into it, or lower it over her head, and walk out into the show-room, borrowing money, as it were, from the gown. Shortly after, she must go within and take it off, and stand in her shift till another was brought or until she was told to get back into her own shoddy togs.

Then Perry Merithew drifted into Dutilh's shop, to buy duds for his Aphra Shaler. And Maryla walked before him, and to his spoiled soul there was something quaint and poignant about her. He studied her while Aphra was changing from costume to costume, and changing her whole personality apparently with each.

To-day Perry was intolerant of all the Aphras. He seized the first opportunity to ask Maryla if she liked the

gown she had on. When she said she adored it, he said, "Keep it. I'll buy it for you." And when she said she did not understand, he said that he would explain "later." Maryla was dazed, but not too dazed to realize that a pleasant conspiracy was afoot and that Aphra was not "in on it."

Socially, Perry Merithew was one of those whom not to know argued oneself unknown. Maryla was the unknowingest and unknownest person imaginable.

She had no idea of Perry Merithew's previous existence. If she had ever heard his name, it had made no impression on her. Maryla knew only that Perry Merithew was attractive to see and that he offered her the way to own a handsome gown. Those facts were enough to earn him her courtesy; and a kind of pleading command in his voice and smile was enough to earn him her obedience.

What she may have thought of Aphra is uncertain. Evidently she did not give her much importance. When Aphra after trying in vain to wheedle any more costumes out of Perry retired to take off the latest dress she had tried on, Perry beckoned Maryla nearer.

The other models were making parades before their customers. They were not aware of Merry Perry's surreptitious dealings. In an undertone he said:

"What time do you finish here, my dear?"

"At five o'clock, sir," Maryla answered wonderingly.

"At five o'clock, eh? Well, look here, my pretty child, at five o'clock I'll be at the corner above in my automobile; it's a limousine—of a hunter green color; you can't miss it. I'll wait for you and when you come along you just step in and we'll have a little spin and a little talk. What do you say? Will you?"

"Yes, sir," said Maryla.

IV

MARYLA told none of the other models what had happened. She went to the dressing room and took off



Red Ida knew Muriel instantly from her numberless pictures in the newspapers. She seized her man by his



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forearm and whispered: "My Gawd, that's Muriel Schuyler. Her old man's worth a billion dollars."

the beautiful gown. She caressed it and brooded over it. It was to be hers! She too was to possess festival attire. What did it matter how much it cost? She had the price to pay. Those women out there should not be the only ones to wear such things. She should not slink on forever shabbily through the world. A man's business is to get money; a woman's business is to get clothes. She was no longer to be a bankrupt. Success was hers.

Many problems perplexed her, but the one sure thing was that her body should no longer be a mere clothes-horse where fine draperies were hung for exhibition.

She had endured such torment as the bank teller endures who juggles wealth in bundles and cannot pay his rent. Now she would embezzle. All the fierce, defiant arguments and Satanic philosophies that sustain the thief and the outlaw surged up in her soul.

She had a vague notion of the price she would be expected to pay. But that neither alarmed her nor charmed her; it remained vague in the back-room of her brain. The thing that fired her soul was the fact that adventure had come within her reach at last and romance was established in her history.

There were several hours to be passed over before she was free. She dressed and paraded in other gowns for other customers, but with less humility than before: for now she too had a Dutilh gown of the latest model. She had also a cavalier.

When closing time came she was ready to go while Elise was still crouched over her street shoes with a buttonhook. She said:

"Aint you waitin' for me, Mareel?"

"Not to-night. I gotta—got to—to do some shop'n'—shopping. G'by."

She hurried out—followed by eyes. She found the Avenue mobbed with people and vehicles. The Avenue was full of eyes. The entire throng seemed to be acquainted with her secret. Those who cast a glance at her were studying her: those who did not look her way were avoiding her purposely.

She walked to the corner. She was not sure just what a limousine was, but she saw an extra large taxicab at the curb and it was dark green. Her heart shot into a gallop. She walked by and could not look in. A voice came from the depths:

"Oh, there you are, my child."

A hand opened the door, but no foot appeared. She turned like a puppet and saw Merithew beckoning her in. He did not get out but she was not used enough to chivalry to notice the difference. She got in. The car rolled away without command in Arabian obedience.

CHAPTER XVII

SO this was a limousine! And now at last she was in one. It was twice as nice as the car that Fay Quincy got into.

A few days ago she would have thought that a limousine was either a kind of fruit or a new cut of dress. Now she knew. Limousines, it seems, are nearly as big as hall bedrooms, only they are all over with upholstery, and they have bouquets of flowers in vases hung on the walls.

Perry looked at Maryla in a way that put all flattery and hospitality into a glance like a handclasp. And he said brilliantly:

"Well, my dear, you kept your promise, didn't you?"

Her reply was equally brilliant:

"Yes, sir."

He took the flowers from the vase. Their stems were wrapped in tinfoil and a pin was stuck on them.

"May I ask you to accept these?" he said. She seized them avidly. Her joy was her thanks. He watched her pinning them over her heart. At length he said:

"Would it be asking too much if I asked your name?"

"Maryla," she said.

She was going to tell her other name, but suddenly she realized that this might not enhance her in his eyes.

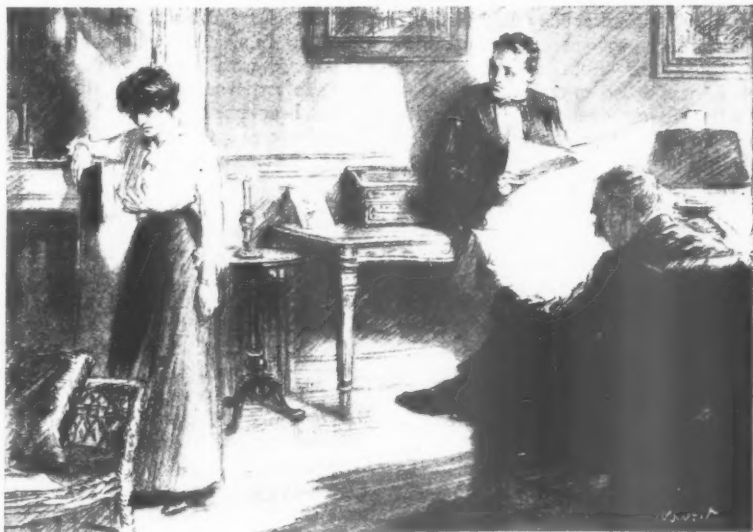
"Maryla what?" he said.

"Just only Maryla," she said.

"Aren't we cautious," he laughed.

"What are we—Russian?"

Continued on page 403 of this issue.



"Edith will get over it, Father," said John.

The God from the Machine

THE girl was in love, but not with a "regular fellow." Fate used a strange instrument to save her. It is one of Clifford Raymond's best stories.

By Clifford S. Raymond

ILLUSTRATED BY H. J. MOWAT

MISS EDITH FARQUER, eighteen and agitated, stood in the shadow of a maple in the parkway of Bronson Boulevard at one thirty A. M. with a trousseau in a small hand-bag. The maple shielded her from the light of an electric lamp fifty feet away. She looked anxiously north in Bronson Boulevard. Two blocks north, Denton street crossed the boulevard. Miss Farquer waited for a red automobile to come out of Denton Street and turn south in Bronson.

When Miss Farquer had told her

father and, by the accident of his presence at home, her brother, of her intent and promise to marry Mr. Archibald Parsons, her father laid down his paper and looked up in alarm as if Time had come upon him suddenly like a thief in the night.

Mr. John Farquer, her brother, had the affection not to be as indignant as his impulse or as contemptuous as his mood, which qualities of restraint are rare in elder brothers.

"He's not a regular fellow, Sister," said Mr. John Farquer.

The father looked at his daughter and flinched, but it was at the inexorable Clepsydra, at the situation and not the person he was asked to embrace.

"Edith will get over it, Father," said John. "Young Parsons is a bad actor. He's a disagreeable young cub with a cigaret instead of a chin and a valet instead of character. Edith's got too much sense."

"I think men are cats," said the young girl. "Archibald is a boy with ideals he needs a woman's help to realize."

The attack was easier to sustain than the siege. Miss Farquer found her men-folk gentle but determined. Mr. Archibald was a young gentleman whom men wished to tie to the end of a garbage wagon.

Therefore the young girl stood in the shadow of the maple and was ashamed, not that she was there but that, being there, the kind opposition of her father and the more resolute opposition of her brother should now be more deterrent than either had been before she had closed the door of her father's house behind her.

A red automobile came out of Denton street, headed south and came near. Miss Farquer's legs would have carried her indoors again. Her pride palsied them.

The red automobile was a hundred feet away—

JOE DERRICK had sat up in Mr. Wakiowack's "Teamsters' Exchange" playing sixty-six until two A. M. If Mr. Wakiowack had been a person of any respect for the law of the community Mr. Derrick would not have sat up after one o'clock, but Mr. Wakiowack was a precinct captain and he exercised a veto on laws he did not like. He vetoed the one o'clock closing ordinance so far as it might otherwise apply to himself.

Mr. Wakiowack vetoed all sumptuary laws. It was, as he understood it, a free country and he found it so. Therefore Mr. Derrick, having the inclination, sat up until two A. M. and played sixty-six in the "Teamsters' Exchange."

When Mr. Derrick arose at four thirty o'clock of the same morning it was by habit and of necessity and not of volition, and it was not with pleasure.

If Mr. Derrick's stomach could have talked to him, even as the ass did to Balaam, it would have told him what any analyst would, that Mr. Wakiowack's beer might be good politically but it was not good chemically. Six more hours of sleep might have enabled Mr. Derrick's constitution to repair the damage, but without it he was poisoned.

Mrs. Hartwell, his landlady, had an exceptionally fine breakfast of beef liver and onions ready. It turned Mr. Derrick's ordinarily robust but now delicate constitution on its beam ends.

Usually Mr. Derrick was silent as to words at breakfast, but he was not glum. If he did not arise and sing with the birds he did not arise and kick as the ass. He and his victuals always had been friendly at Mrs. Hartwell's, and that lady had every reason to be patient and considerate when Joe displayed a temper of strange hostility to the liver and onions.

But when inevitability chooses to pile consequences upon consequences it frequently enters into partnership with coincidence.

Thus it happened that when Mr. Derrick's fate, having poisoned him with political beer and robbed him of his sleep, led him to complain of so reasonable a diet as liver and onions, Mrs. Hartwell was in no mood to consider lightly any aspersive look or resentful mood.

Mrs. Hartwell's most esteemed enemy, Mrs. Gratz, had handed her the evening before a slam which utterly devastated her power of rejoinder and destroyed her peace of mind.

Ordinarily Mrs. Hartwell's temperament disturbed her as little as Mr. Derrick's did him.

"I suppose you want some grape fruit and roast turkey," said Mrs. Hartwell. "Any time my food isn't good enough for the grand dukes that pay me four dollars a week they can take their money to the Blackstone."

"Take your onions and use them for a shampoo," said Mr. Derrick. He arose from the table and, going out of the house, slammed the door behind him.

He then remembered he did not have his hat with him and went back to get it. He met it coming out. Mrs. Hartwell

wished to be rid of this vestige of an undesirable and threw it down the steps. Mr. Derrick received it unexpectedly, in the face, but took it and overlooked the manner of getting it.

His mood had not been determined. It was forming but was not rooted. Joe Derrick was a feather in the winds. He went to the Teamsters' Exchange and made a breakfast of three glasses of beer and two pieces of sausage.

This exhilarated him mildly, bringing him out of the depression, and his temper became less volcanic. Thus more pleasantly disposed he went to work; but three glasses of beer superimposed on the consequences of too many glasses of beer are but temporarily effective.

When Mr. Derrick came to the coal yards the afflatus had gone and a deeper gloom had come.

When he entered the stables to harness his horses he was no friend of man. As a diagnostician of his own symptoms he knew that what he needed was more beer. He took a tin bucket which hung under the seat of his wagon and crossed the street to Mike's Place, where he had it filled for ten cents. Half was foam, half was beer. It is thus with the brew in buckets.

When Mr. Derrick had returned to the coal yards he was in a way to regard the prospect more optimistically again and raised the bucket to take a Vallahan swig of malt and hops, or of popular substitutes for the same sold as such.

As he did so a stream of beer, coming up through the suds and finding vent in a hole in the side of the bucket, went down inside his shirt and drenched him. Mr. Derrick swore and twisted the bucket about to escape the stream. It came through another hole. Turn as Mr. Derrick might and did, there was always a stream of beer to flow down inside his shirt.

Mr. Derrick set the bucket down and examined it. A circle of holes had been punched through it, an inch below the rim, with an awl—a shrewd device of the yard boss to keep the teamsters from “rushing the can,”—to prevent or discourage it.

Mr. Derrick threw the bucket at a bay horse, which jumped and kicked. Then

he swore steadily for five minutes, after which he went out of the yards in the manner of a man going determinedly without knowing where.

The feather was in a high wind and flying swiftly.

Joe returned to Mike's Place, and again fate showed an intent to give kings and chancellors a day off and play with a coal teamster. Joe went back with an appetite not for beer but for spirits. He was of too dynamic a tendency now to lull a splendid, growing rage into an early morning stupor by drugging it with beer. Mr. Derrick wanted action to square himself with humanity, and he took whisky.

SIX glasses sent him forth inflamed but aimless. His intuitions were very simple when his reason was clouded, and one very simple intuition told him to take a street-car if he wanted to go anywhere and, if he did not know where he wanted to go, to take any street-car.

A newsboy offered him a transfer for a penny. Mr. Derrick elaborately gave a quarter for it and then determinedly boarded a street-car on which the transfer would have been valueless even if it had not been dated the day before.

Mr. Derrick and the conductor immediately entered into argument which gave distress to all women within hearing. The motorman with his controller took sides with the conductor, and Mr. Derrick was cast into the gutter. The conductor went about his business with a bleeding nose. Mr. Derrick had a three-inch scalp wound and bled copiously.

He sat on the curb and dripped indifferently into the gutter, indifferently observing and indifferently observed until there came one with a yellow Van Dyke beard who stopped and spoke with allopathic peremptoriness.

“What do you mean by this?” he asked. “You’re making a mess of the gutter. Come up to my office.”

Mr. Derrick did as he was told, and the Van Dyke person led him a half-block down the street and up a flight of stairs to a room of hospital odor and surgical aspect, where Mr. Derrick had his wound washed and sewed up. When this was done the Van Dyked one said:

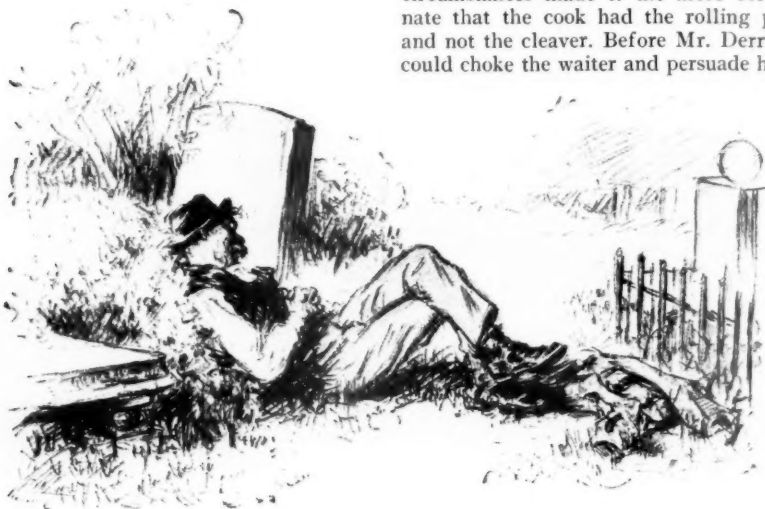
"Now you're patched up. Get out—and the next time let the other fellow mess up the gutter."

Mr. Derrick gave neither money nor thanks, understanding that neither was expected. He went down the flight of stairs and by a sure prescience to the nearest saloon, where he had two drinks of whisky and confessed a desire for food, which was not remarkable, considering the total failure of breakfast at Mrs. Hartwell's.

Next door to the saloon was a Greek restaurant, meaning thereby that the proprietor had come from Salonika and that

without oral expression of his ambition, reached up, for the plate upon which were the pieces of steak and gave the waiter a forcible feeding, strangling him until he opened his mouth, and therein and thereupon dropping a piece of beef.

The waiter's half strangulated cries brought the cook. Mr. Derrick afterwards rejoiced that the cook came with the rolling pin and not the cleaver. The waiter, unfortunately, had obtained a bite on Mr. Derrick's finger and, as the cook came out, this fact not only gave Mr. Derrick pain but detained him. The circumstances made it the more fortunate that the cook had the rolling pin and not the cleaver. Before Mr. Derrick could choke the waiter and persuade him



He continued his sleep undisturbed.

the cooking was American skillet in its worst form.

Mr. Derrick ordered a steak, and upon its being served found it did not meet his mood or satisfy his taste. The waiter had no patience for capriciousness.

"Go t'ell," said the waiter, who was a gentleman of small English.

Mr. Derrick looked at him and noted that he had curly black hair. Observing this, Mr. Derrick cut his steak into small pieces and then leaped suddenly upon the curly haired one, throwing him to the floor and straddling him.

The waiter yelled, but Mr. Derrick,

to leave off chewing the finger, the rolling pin hit him.

It was a glancing blow but it loosened another piece of scalp. Mr. Derrick, breaking away from the cannibalistic waiter, fought his way into the street, with a new scalp wound and an injured finger. He assumed that the yellow Van Dyked one had undertaken certain responsibilities with regard to him and went back to his office.

"You ought to be equipped with a field hospital," said the Van Dyke, seeing Mr. Derrick gory again. "It takes too much of your time coming back from the front to a base hospital each

time. This will cost you ten dollars. Got the money?"

"Yes, but I need it," said Mr. Derrick.

"Keep it then," said the Van Dyke.

AFTER repairs had been made, Mr. Derrick decided that he needed more whisky, which he got. Thus stimulated he recalled his appetite and, being a determined person, he went a third time to breakfast and this time ordered and ate it without other event.

As a determined person Mr. Derrick was tenacious in his idea that one going anywhere took a street-car, and that one going nowhere in particular but somewhere in general took any street-car, which he did, and fell asleep.

At the end of the line, by a cemetery, the car crew put him off. He was indifferent to fate, accepted it meekly, went into the cemetery and continued his sleep undisturbed in a clump of lilac bushes.

After four hours he awoke, wanting whisky. Across the street from the entrance to the cemetery was a saloon. By the curb in front of it were six automobiles. Within the saloon were the men of a funeral party. They were ready to accept as a proper co-mourner any gentleman asking for liquor. Mr. Derrick was such an one. Mr. Derrick became a mourner, a state both economical and convivial.

Mr. Derrick learned that poor Jim had been a good scout, but he could not persuade himself that the taking off had been untimely. Mr. Derrick found the obsequies at least opportune and accepted the compensations of a mitigated grief.

In circumstances so pleasant, Mr. Derrick might have lingered, making much of life so advantageously presented by death—but he was Fate's pet for the day. Therefore even in so merry a cloister he grew restless and departed from the mourners and the assured happiness of association with them.

He had come to object to street-cars for locomotion. The suggestion was one of slaughter or somnolence, and he wanted neither. As a teamster he had been wide awake and was preparing against the day of the gasoline truck.

He knew how to drive a motor, and, objecting to street-cars, he took one of the automobiles at the curb, giving a mourner cause for a genuine grief later. In getting away he was undetected.

He was nearly back into the downtown district, driving slowly, when a woman with a child in her arms, hysterical with effort of running and lack of breath, implored him, holding up the child:

"Help me," she cried. "Get me away."

As he stopped she put the child into the tonneau and tugged inexpertly at the door. Mr. Derrick opened it and she scrambled in.

"Hurry, hurry," she implored him.

A half-block down the street a man, shouting, ran bare-headed and with one hand held in the air.

"Hurry, hurry," cried the woman and fell back sprawling in the car as Mr. Derrick sent it forward. She recovered her equilibrium and her breath, and urged him to go into side streets, to turn many corners and to double back by a street a mile west.

When he had driven for a half hour she asked to be allowed to leave the car; and when she had gone, Mr. Derrick, out of the depths of much wisdom, told himself:

"A woman case. I'd better beat it."

He abandoned the car and went forward on foot.

HE came to a small jewelry shop and stopped to look in the window at the watches and rings. His observations were startled by a crash of glass. A padded brick lay on top of a case of watches, and two men, grabbing through the hole in the pane, were indifferent to Mr. Derrick's presence or confident of his indifference to their presence. They were in flight before he had cause and consequence related, and then he saw that the jeweler was charging out of the shop with a revolver.

Mr. Derrick's instant thought was that his own position was equivocal if not condemning. His next was that his wisdom was in flight. As a captured bystander, however innocent, he would need explanations.

The jeweler was fat and a poor shot.

The one fact prevented him from overtaking Mr. Derrick, although he took after him, and the other fact cleared the street of all persons who otherwise might have been heroes in intercepting him. Poor shooting also punctured a number of windows, but with people taking precipitately into doorways Mr. Derrick made his escape.

As soon as he had turned a corner he abruptly brought his run down to a walk and, with heavy breathing controlled painfully, simulated the indifference of a saunter until a saloon offered his customary sanctuary. There he had whisky and security.

When he came forth he was determined to seek less precipitate amusements and went into a moving-picture theatre. He found a seat in a row where sat a fat woman and four children. The aisle seat in this row was vacant. Mr. Derrick took it.

There was enough light for him to see that a very pretty little girl sat beside him, on the edge of her chair, living altogether in the circle of light on the canvas.

Derrick noticed her pretty absorption and became sentimental, for which the reason was partly alcoholic. He wished he might stroke her hair but he restrained the satisfaction of this desire to the harmless liberty of stretching out his arm along the back of her chair.

When he turned his attention to the picture he found a fire scene. Engines, trucks and reels, horse pulled or gasoline driven, came out of enlarging specks in the far distance of streets and dashed into the faces of the spectators, only to be seen thus approaching again from the far distance of another street. Mr. Derrick followed the run with mild interest the length of several streets and then closed his eyes. His head sank slowly and heavily, and he was conscious he was going to sleep. To guard against it he straightened up restlessly from time to time and half opened his eyes. Thus at one such lifting of his head and eyelids, he saw, on the picture screen, firemen mounted on a ladder to rescue children at a window.

He was aroused to interest for a moment, but sleep had a powerful grip on

him and he nodded again, and this time he slept for ten minutes. When he awoke it was with an inarticulate cry. He picked up the little girl from the seat beside him. The frightened child screamed. Mr. Derrick, with the face of a man devoted to a desperate but noble enterprise, holding the wriggling girl with his arm about her waist, went down the aisle.

THE fat lady screamed and for an instant was frantic but ineffectual in her efforts to get by the three remaining and intervening children, who were so startled as to be immovable. When she had come, screaming, over young, obstructing legs, she went down the aisle in pursuit of Mr. Derrick.

Even the operator was startled and forgot to turn his film.

Several men, jumping up from aisle seats, tried to stop Derrick, but he had a mission and was irresistible. A policeman collared him on the sidewalk. The frightened child squirmed out of his arms and, in an agony of alarm, ran into the arms of the emerging fat lady, who, also shrieking, had come, also irresistibly through and at the head of a curious outpouring from the theatre.

"Did they all get out?" Mr. Derrick asked of the policeman.

The fat lady tried to beat him and scratch him. The policeman pushed her aside and started to move Mr. Derrick through the increasing crowd which filled the sidewalk.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Derrick asked. "Why don't you help the people out of that fire?"

"Come on," said the policeman, giving him a push. "Clear out of here, you fellows. You can come to the station, Missus, and make a complaint. Come along now."

At the corner, where the policeman sent in a call for a patrol wagon, Mr. Derrick, who had been passive and given no trouble, revealed but one interest in his inexplicable condition.

"Say," he asked, "wasn't there no fire in that theater?"

"No," said the policeman, looking at him suddenly with other interest than that of custodial hostility.

"Good night," said Mr. Derrick as



He whistled in front of the house, but nothing came of it.

if he saw and accepted his fate without attempting to account for it.

At the station, later, the policeman good-naturedly became an advocate for Mr. Derrick, who at the time was down stairs in a cell with a drunken and stupefied negro.

"You've got this fellow wrong," said the policeman to the fat lady. "He aint a kidnaper. He's been drinking and he thought there was a fire in the place. He liked the little girl and he was trying to carry her out. Go ahead and make a complaint if you want to, but the guy's on the square and he thought he was a hero."

"I'm not mad at him," said the fat lady. "Nobody but a crazy man would try to run off with a child that way. They had some fire pictures and maybe he's telling the truth. I aint going to make any complaint."

"Just as you like," said the policeman. "If you don't want him held we'll let him go."

"He can go for all me," said the fat lady and took a heavy-footed departure.

The lock-up man let Mr. Derrick out.

"Beat it," said the phlegmatic policeman. "There's no charge against you. And cut out the booze for a while."

Mr. Derrick had not complained of Fate, and he went disinterestedly and wholly unresponsive to the policeman's good advice. Each crisis in his career demanded more whisky.

He met this one and satisfied its demands and found himself invigorated if not inspired for the evening.

FOOD suggested itself. He entered a restaurant where he could watch his Hamburger steak cooking on the range under a hood. Temporarily he became placid and epicurean.

A hurdy gurdy drew up at the curb and a jaded Italian turned the crank, pleasuring Mr. Derrick, who reacted to "O You Great Big Beautiful Doll" as a pundit to Brahms. He was considering the practicability of dispossessing the Italian and making off with the machine for a night of serenading delights when a gasoline moving van stopped at the curb. The crew entered the restaurant and went to a table in the rear.

Mr. Derrick was ready to pay for his dinner—had a quarter in his hand; he gave it a spin; heads he'd take the hurdy gurdy, tails the auto' truck. It came tails. Mr. Derrick gave it to the waiter and received a nickel in change.

He took the motor truck, put it high speed and was a half block down the street before there was any pursuit and when there was, it was hopeless.

Mr. Derrick had only one idea of direction and that was easily suited. It was by boulevard in any direction. The object of this was to cause apoplexy in park policemen.

Some of them sent him off the drives good naturedly; others sent him with maledictions and threats of arrest. He went at each invitation of whatever kind, and after a detour of three or four blocks, returned to forbidden territory. There was wisdom in his lawlessness. The park policemen would be the last to learn of a stolen truck, and the boulevards would be the last thoroughfare searched.

Mr. Derrick was undetected in his joy riding, but it soon was uninteresting, in spite of the park policemen. He became a person ripe for human companionship. With this impulse he ceased to irritate boulevard patrolmen, abandoned the truck and hunted out an inviting saloon. He was indifferent to extraordinary precautions.

Within, his easy good nature found what it craved, and after an ordinary word or two with the bartender and a cautious offer to be host, to the extent of a round of drinks, to several indolent men at the bar, he found himself in a sociable game of pinocle at one of the little tables by the wall and was a comfortable human with occasional glasses of beer.

Thus his day went into a late night peacefully and Mr. Derrick was as a worried leaf which had found a corner in the wall at last.

At one o'clock he arose to go home and found the motor truck standing, as he had left it, at the curb a block from the saloon. He had done with excitement but the truck offered the easiest way of getting home and he took it and went by the shortest route.

A mile from the saloon he saw a stack of furniture at the curb and slowed down to note its circumstances. A man came out into the street and Mr. Derrick stopped his truck.

"Why didn't you bring a band?" the man asked softly but angrily. "What do you mean by sending a motor truck for a thing of this sort? I don't want it advertised."

"What's the matter with it?" Mr. Derrick asked.

"Nothing, except that it will get the whole neighborhood up," said the angry man. "Get out here and help get this furniture in. We'll have the janitor out in a minute."

Mr. Derrick helped to put chairs and tables, mattresses and trunks, boxes and barrels into the truck.

They were interrupted by an outrush from the basement. It was one man, but it was the janitor, and it was an outrush.

"This stuff's off," said the janitor. "Why don't you pay your rent? You can't make any get-away like this."

He took hold of a chair which Mr. Derrick held, and Mr. Derrick hit him on the point of the chin. As he went into the gutter, Mr. Derrick, without comment, walked away.

He was in fresh complications, and walking away was the sanest, easiest escape. He deserted the truck and furniture, escaped from the sprawling janitor and the anguished householder and went his way.

Two blocks further on Mr. Derrick came to Denton Street and turned east. In an alleyway by a tall residence he saw a red automobile. Walking undoubtedly was serene but also undoubtedly, it was tiresome. Mr. Derrick took the red automobile. He turned south in Bronson Boulevard. He saw a young girl, carrying a small grip, step out of the shadow of a tree, but even as he observed her, a sound at his right side caused him to shut off his power. A tire was flat.

The red automobile was a hundred feet away—

MISS FARQUER stepped out of the shadow of the maple and towards the curb. The red automobile showed no signs of slacking speed, but as it was almost in line with her a tire blew out. The sound startled her but she only moaned, observing the malapertness of her fate and that of Mr. Archibald Parsons.

Then one who was not Mr. Archibald Parsons arose out of the red automobile and looked at the flat tire.

He did not see the young girl, and he talked man fashion.

When Mr. Joseph Derrick was unconscious of the presence of young ladies and talked man fashion he was Homeric. The young girl sustained a shock and fled with her small grip, up the steps of the house. The kindly door closed on the man language of Mr. Derrick.

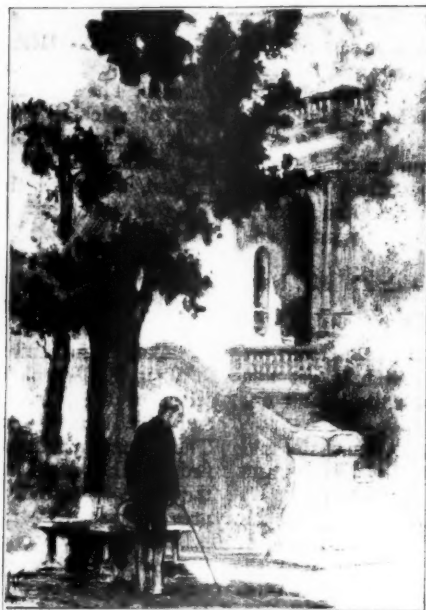
The unconscious geyser of this language saw his flat tire and wasted no time. He went on on foot until he came to a small park where there were friendly benches. No policeman came to disturb him. Mr. Derrick slept.

A young gentleman who wore a cigaret instead of a chin found the red automobile. The young gentleman tried to use man language but it was not manly. He jacked up the car and succeeded in putting on a new tire. He whistled in front of the house into which the young girl had run, but nothing came of it. The young man turned his car and drove it north.

MR. DERRICK awoke at daylight and felt far from well. Nevertheless he was a determined person. He went into a small shop and bought a tin pail. He ate a breakfast of coffee and doughnuts and later presented himself at the coal yard. The yard boss observed the pail.

"I'm about through punching holes in those pails," observed the boss significantly.

"This is for water," said Mr. Derrick. "I'm on the wagon."



The Prodigal Husband

By Cosmo Hamilton

THE man who startled two nations with a real problem play, "The Blindness of Virtue," presents a short story which makes you wonder which deserves more sympathy, the American who traded her wealth and youth for a title, or the Englishman who took the money and overlooked a real love.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. F. JAMES

HE suddenly faced a looking-glass in the strong glare of daylight. "Oh my God," he said, "I'm old!"

The looking-glass had always been there; the Italian sun had nearly always been as glaring; and Edmund Willington had always been the constant friend of both. Yet there was nothing surprising in his involuntary cry. There was nothing surprising in the fact that he suddenly saw himself for the first time as others had watched him slowly become. A man seldom sees himself as he is. He

is, as a rule, wise enough to make the looking-glass reflect only what he wishes to see, and this wisdom had been more peculiar to Willington than ninety-nine per cent of the men of his time. But conscience, like the hand of God, touches the arm of every man when he least expects it. And conscience, unlike everything else, never lies.

A series of little unnoticed things had worked subtly and curiously upon this past master of wise men and had left him peculiarly sensitive to the voice that was to use his ear so cruelly. He noticed

all at once that some of the furniture in the Villa L'Aiglon above Lake Como, —ah, what a view!—had become shabby. Was it possible, then, that he had bought it all so long as fifteen years before? He detected a new and quite unpleasant stiffening at the knees as he walked up the roundabout hill from the charming little town. Had he really struck fifty last birthday? Fifty?..... There had been a young English boy newly come to the Hotel Bellevue. He was very straight and quiet and well-put-together and well-bredly insolent. He was fourteen years old. If Willington had a son he would have been fourteen, and like that boy. And then, one evening on the terrace in the moonlight, after dinner, Madame, whose lips were too red, had darted a look at an English guest that once had only been inspired by Willington. Next morning, in an English paper three days old, a small paragraph had it that Lady Edmund Willington, once the beautiful and wealthy Miss Marie Emerson Van Fleet of New York, had opened a bazaar in aid of the Hospital for Crippled Children, in Marblebone.

Lady Edmund Willington! Good heavens, had fifteen whole years been torn off the calendar, then, since that curious day when all New York society and many of its suburban women and local nursemaids and butcher boys had collected to see the fashionable wedding at the big Fifth Avenue Church? And now a childless and husbandless woman opened bazaars in aid of crippled children, at Marblebone.

Once that all-too-wise man let those involuntary words escape from his lips and caught himself unawares in the looking-glass, conscience became his constant and detested companion. It did not walk in step, up and down the once peaceful Lethæan Terrace, but turned and faced him and blocked his path. Not strenuous disregard, nor impatient shutting of eyes, nor irritable unrecognition could keep this new and importunate visitor at even arm's length. Daily, hourly and moment by moment its voice grew stronger, and the things it said were bitter to hear.

"You so much too-wise man, the time has come at last when you must hear me. Yes, you are old; older than you ought

to be, and very lonely. Self-indulgence has been your fetish, and all false gods are fickle. Look at yourself well and see the weakness of your good-looking face, scored with the careless lines of *laissez faire* and the devil take duty. Touch your gray hairs with dye if you like, go into Rome post haste on some plausible excuse so that you may harry the nearest barber to put you through vibro-massage treatment—nothing will alter facts. You are old, my selfish, strenuously irresponsible friend: old and empty and dull and disappointed and alone. Yes, alone, for Madame, herself hiding facts behind an all-too-palpable and somewhat pathetic layer of paint and powder, is seeking a new and more ardent pastime; and the wife whom you married for the money she could give you, has forgotten to require you and is content in single blessedness. You've had a long and sunny inning. It is now my turn, and I shall spare you not one jot, not one."

POOOR devil! Even his valet, a comfortable thief and not ungrateful, was sorry. He could see the mental perturbations of the debonair lord who had gone through his lazy, sun-loving days in a manner so beautifully English. He was not slow to catch the tragi-comic quick resort to hair-dye, the sudden rigorous dieting, the struggle to evade the fluent bottle. He could guess at the new and horrible sleepless nights, the stirring, irritable restlessness, the abortive attempts to play Canute with conscience. But even the sharp valet eye could not see everything. It did not see, for instance, the little sarcastic scene at the breakfast table one glorious morning which did more to shake Willington than the sight of himself in the glass. Madame entered late. Willington was eating fruit with both eyes back in the past, fixed with amused indifference on the slim, beautifully dressed figure of his bride, as she had lain outstretched upon a deck chair on the port side of the White Star liner en route for England and home. And back into his mind came the calculation he had then made inwardly of how many pounds twenty-five thousand dollars made—his allowance from her

yearly income—and what he would do with it.

He rose as Madame entered. Even in that irregular ménage he maintained the little observances of good breeding. "Good morning, *chérie*," he said, and pulled out her chair and bent to kiss her.

She shrank a little and put up one small pink-tipped finger. "Oh, *mon vieux!*" she murmured with an expres-

sapristi, one needs a change at last. You look as though a little of your humid native air would be good for you. The sun has dried you up, is it not?"

That evening, alone, downcast, even carelessly dressed, he took the train for Paris, and the following evening *Le Petit Journal* announced that Lord Edmund Willington had arrived at the Hotel Meurice, Rue de Rivoli. He lingered for two days in the Paris that was given up to holiday makers, finding nothing of his departed youth in the full-blown Champs Élysées, no revivifying memories in the sun bathed Place de la Concorde, no pleasure in the once alluring lights of the Café de la Paix. He wandered, still with conscience at his elbow, across the Pont Royal. The sun gilded the Seine, and the flags of France and America hung limp against a cloudless sky. He tried to find the



The slim figure of his bride outstretched upon

sion of nausea so descriptive that he went cold from head to foot.

"*Milles pardons*," he said hoarsely. Good God, he had heaped devotion and luxury at this woman's feet for fifteen years. She had had all the best of his life.

She shrugged her shoulders. "I do not wish to seem unkind, Edmund, but,

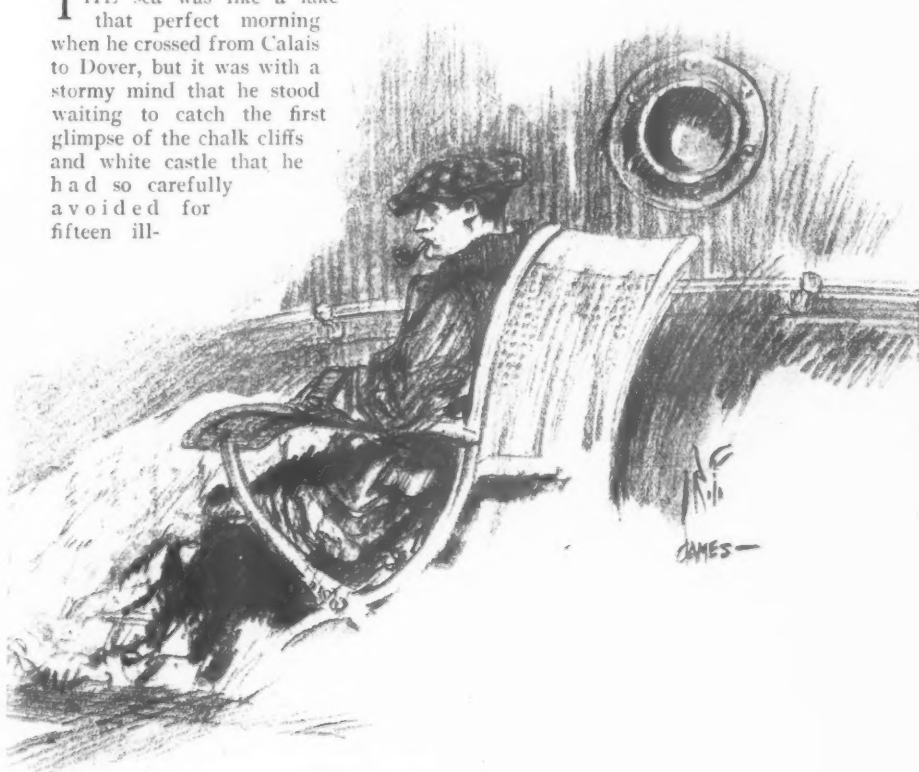
shreds of a gay and careless life in the student streets that lay beneath the shadow of the Odéon. Dead Sea fruit, all of it, all of it. There was the same old stone building, the same dingy little restaurants, the same worn cobbles, the same pleasant gardens of the Luxembourg alive with merry sparrows and playing children, but all the faces were

strange—many of the names were new. Where was *la petite* Mimi who had cooked his breakfast omelette and coffee in the Rue de Corneille, number twenty-seven? Where were the young spirits who were to carve historic names on the great scroll of Art? Gone, like those fifteen wasted years of his, never to return.

THE sea was like a lake that perfect morning when he crossed from Calais to Dover, but it was with a stormy mind that he stood waiting to catch the first glimpse of the chalk cliffs and white castle that he had so carefully avoided for fifteen ill-

pick apples on a monotonous fruit farm among young and virile colonials and French work-people.

Like so many others he had been unfortunate in his choice of parents. He had never recovered from the handicap of parentage. If, with his nimble wit and youthful enthusiasm, his irresistible looks, his charm of manner, his unpractised but latent adaptability, he had



a deck chair en route for England and home.

spent years. But for the yearly allowance of the woman who had been his wife only so far as name went, they must have been punctuated with debt and humiliation and perhaps with roguery. He must have lived upon his wits in a country which had grown rather hard-hearted towards the titled waster, or found his useless way to Canada to

been born the son of a brewer or a doctor, he might have made a brilliant and a useful name. He would certainly have gone from a public school to Oxford. He would have begun by writing inferior verse for the *Isis* and the *Magazine*, but would eventually have attracted attention at the Union and found himself in the notebooks of political organizers. His

hard-working father's money would have made it easy for him to enter the chambers of a well-advertised K. C., M. P. He must have done well and honestly, married for love and brought up a family of sturdy children.

As it was, he was the third son of a conscientious Duke. He was reared in the proper atmosphere of pompous loftiness, of dignified pageantry conducted with a necessarily strict regard for economy, and brought up in the belief that self-help is *infra dig.* So, of course, he did not endeavor, because he did not know how, to live on his pay as a Guard's officer, and an altogether inadequate allowance out of the ducal pocket. He found himself eventually between the devil of bankruptcy and the deep sea of an American marriage.

HE went to New York one fine autumn with an experienced and supercilious man-servant, took a suite of rooms at the Holland House, and while enjoying the lavish and whole-hearted hospitality of Fifth Avenue and its immediate environs, delighted in its amazing skyline and kept a calculating eye upon its wealthy debutantes.

Before winter had given way before the soft breezes of a delightful spring he had accepted the hand and the allowance of Miss Marie Van Fleet, who was quite prepared to love him for his graceful insouciance, his well-exercised, greyhound figure, his distraught hazel eyes, his noiseless laugh, his imperceptible humor. The wedding over, he went his own way, almost, — how wonderful! — free of debt, leaving a hurt and disillusioned wife amid the newly renovated charms of an English country house.

He raced with varying luck. He took a personal interest in the musical side of the drama, which led to a brief insight into what are called artistic circles—perhaps because they are so seldom straight.

He shot big game in India and the Rockies in order to remove a rather unpleasant taste in the mouth, and when well on in the thirties, he rented the Villa L'Aiglon, read Browning with amazement, Tennyson with a growing delight, Byron with infinite sympathy

and Shelley with a very enjoyable sadness. It was then that he revived the lost art of writing verse and read it aloud to his violet-eyed friend, his expensive Eve in exile.

For fifteen years this man and this woman killed time together with varying happiness, but the full and complete enjoyment of the utterly neglected but proudly ungrumbling wife's voluntary allowance, under the warm Italian sun. Every season they enjoyed the opera in Rome, the tables at Monte Carlo, the studios in Venice. Once or twice they sought the bracing atmosphere of St. Moritz and indulged lazily in its winter sports. But the Villa L'Aiglon always drew them back to its wide terrace above the gentle lake and drugged them into the *laissez faire* of sensuous dilettantism.

POOR devil! To what an exquisite epitome of art had Nemesis brought her punishment.

London was almost a new city to this Englishman. Old land-marks had given place to new, glaring buildings. The Ritz Hotel reared its head upon the spot where Walshingham House had once been wont to stand and look out upon the green park. Piccadilly had been vulgarized, Victoria station rebuilt; the Haymarket had lost its Addisonian note and even St. James' Street had not escaped from Philistine hands. Even St. James' Street!

This elderly man thanked his gods,—he was not blessed with only one,—that his club was recognizable, at any rate. White's had not fallen victim to the craze for improvement. He went up the same old stone steps with a strange emotion. He almost prayed that he might find the same face in the doorkeeper's cubby-hole. But no, it was not to be. A youngish, different man, ruled in place of the ancient side-whiskered person who had been in the habit of wishing him good morning as he doled out letters.

He was asked his name by the naturally suspicious porter, and recovering from the shock went eagerly into the smoking-room, eyed curiously by the servants. Surely there would be familiar faces and friendly hands in the well-

remembered room to greet him? Surely. No, not one. Young men and new faces. He went to the reading-room. Young men and new faces again, and indifference everywhere. He passed into the coffee-room and sat at a lonely table. The new generation possessed the place. His only friends were the pictures, and in the eyes of the faces that looked down upon him from the walls he thought that he detected a note of scorn and antagonism. After luncheon he was glad to hurry away.

HIS—her—town house was in Berkeley Square. He had read of it in old numbers of the morning *Post* and the *World*. He had never spent a night under its roof. He drove there, stringing himself up to see the humorous side of something in which he could find no humor. How delightful, for instance, to be challenged by the footman! How exquisitely laughable to be obliged to ask a hired person the way to the various rooms! How quite too comic to hesitate before saying "How d'ye do" to one's wife! The window-boxes of the old and dignified house were a little shabby. The geraniums had lost the ripeness of their color. Willington had a feeling that her ladyship was away.

Like a man who resolutely presents himself with an aching tooth at the doorway of his dentist and hopes eagerly to be told that he cannot obtain an appointment, this irresolute, regretting, strangely emotional creature would give anything not to face his wife—then. He rang the bell timidly. It was answered by a footman whose hair was a little untidy and who was not shaved.

"Is Lady Edmund Willington at home?"

"No, sir. Her ladyship is out of town."

"Where?"

The man hesitated, and ran his eyes over his master's graceful figure.

"At Spokewells, sir, her ladyship's place in Buckinghamshire."

"Thank you." The man was right. It was her ladyship's place. Willington stood leaning on his stick, looking rather wistfully into the hall. The footman waited. "A fine man once," he thought. "What's he done to himself?"

Willington turned to go, and stopped. "Oh, by the way," he said, "just see if there is a letter or a telegram for me."

A puzzled look came into the man's eyes. The gentleman must be a little bit wrong in the head. Willington might have heard the inward comment. The blood ran up into his face, but he gave the man one of his irresistible smiles.

"I forgot to tell you that I am Lord Edmund Willington," he said, quietly.

The footman's backbone melted. His unshaven face almost hurt him.

"Oh, I beg pardon, my lord. No, my lord, there is nothing for you."

"Good day," said Willington and walked slowly away.

HE spent the night in London, at the Carlton Hotel. The town was in that condition that is known in the jargon of the smart set as "empty" and was, in consequence, full to overflowing. Americans and French people and sturdy provincials filled the hotel and the streets and the theatres and the art galleries. Regent Street flew flags of all nations and offered every conceivable kind of stock at summer clearance prices. Bands played popular tunes in the parks, and the flotsam and jetsam slept in ungainly attitudes on the brown turf. The guards at St. James' Palace and the Horse Guards were relieved before a large and heterogeneous audience of cosmopolitans, some of whom were impressed, some amused. Coaches clattered away from Northumberland Avenue and left behind them the sharp, merry note of horns. But to Willington it was all very depressing. He was hideously alone, terribly regretful. He went out into the lighted streets after dinner, avoided his club and walked up Piccadilly and round Leicester Square. Among all the mass of faces into which he peered there was not one that lighted up at the sight of him. He went to bed at ten o'clock and lay, open-eyed, for hours. The empty pageant of fifteen years passed relentlessly before them.

THE following morning Lord Edmund Willington left London for Buckinghamshire; and all the way down, the song the train sang, over and over

again was "What is she like, how has Time dealt with her, what will she say to me?"

When he arrived unheralded before a whirlwind of many feelings, he stood at the quiet entrance of the little station and looked wistfully at the beautiful Chiltern Hills that lay against the sky beyond the sleepy town. No man touched his hat to him; no face broke into a smile of welcome; no car or carriage waited for him on the road. The place was old but very new to him. What was his—her—place called? Spokewells, yes Spokewells. How well it was named, and how sarcastically! Every stone of it would reproach him for his long and careless neglect. He had to ask his way.

He passed through an indifferent village of warm old houses and small shops. No man ever felt such a stranger in his own land as this prodigal husband.

Along the old wide white road he went slowly, a prey to bitterness, and step by step went Nemesis, smiling—a cruel, just, implacable, inevitable enemy. The country was like a beautiful woman in that luscious pause in her life before prime slips into the first sere touches of autumn. Everywhere the golden corn waved its myriad heads to the soft air. Poppies lighted up the fields and covered some of the distant slopes like a deep blush. Flocks of sparrows moved sharply from place to place, and crows flapped along heavily, forebodingly, the only small, dark specks against a wholly blue, transparent sky.

For no apparent reason a great lump swelled his throat as he came to the top of a wide and shady drive and faced the old, warm, dignified house. It was so English, so resolutely unpretentious, so beautiful in its almost maternal look, sitting there so quietly among its old companions and friends, the oaks and beeches and elms and yews and cedars. A bevy of white fantail pigeons rose, with a whirr of wings, as he went slowly up. His heart turned for a moment. These dear spotless things must be her friends, and they fled in front of him. Was it an omen?

He felt emotional and broken and ashamed. What right had he, the unfaithful, ungrateful, shameless man, to

intrude upon the seclusion of this lady's home? He, who had married flagrantly for money and never once had the decency or the honesty or the fairness to give any one thing in return, even a receipt! And here he was, not joining her from choice or eager desire to make amends, but being led, like a bad boy, an old bad boy, an old, sad, bad, disappointed, humbled, regretful boy, by Nemesis. The train's refrain came back into his ears as he entered the open door and stood alone, listening and nervous, in the great wide Hall. "What is she like, how has Time dealt with her—what will she say to me?"

He gave his name quietly and simply to the butler. Where was her ladyship? Gone for a little walk with her dog. And how was her ladyship in health? Tired after much hard work in the slums and hospitals of London.... Ah, how the faces of those crippled children must light up at her soft step—she who did not possess even a crippled child of her own.

"Oh my God," he said in his heart, "Oh my God, what have I been doing with my life, what have I done with the life of this good woman?"

God always comes back into the hearts of men when the hand of trouble and repentance lies heavily upon their shoulders. There were tears on his face as he stumbled through the rooms. Her hand was everywhere. What charming taste, what delicate decorations... He touched an open book with respectful fingers and lifted a piece of needlework, fragrant with her touch, to his lips. He hesitated on the threshold of her own room and turned away. It was not for such as he.... How pleasantly thoughtful and thorough were the arrangements of his quarters: a bulb of electric light above the pillow, a classic or two to his elbow, a bath, hot and cold, with shower, in an adjoining room. A stab of unexpected jealousy made him wince. For whom were all these little intimate, personal things?... There were brushes on the dressing table, slippers and a bathwrap, razors in a case. Then she too.... But no, thank God! Each thing was stamped with his own initials.

He had come home, then. He, the bat-



They were strangers who had ripened into friends, these two.

tered vessel, the pirate ship, untrue to its flag, had found a harbor.

He went down and stood upon the terrace in the sun, to wait. Through a mist of tears he gazed out upon the well-kept, gleaming gardens. And presently he heard light steps behind him. He turned and bared his head. He saw a slowly approaching woman, tall, slight, graceful, proud, with white hair, and a sad face, a patrician face, a face with large, watchful, empty eyes.

"Oh my God," he said in his heart, "*this* is the woman whom I have deserted all these wretched years."

She gave him both her hands. "Oh, Edmund, Edmund," she said.

AND from that moment began a curious sequence of months, the first of them slipping from a warm and gracious summer to the sere and yellow autumn and into leafless chill of a long and humid winter. Then spring broke, eagerly and tenderly, with all its young live things big with hope. Husband and wife, the one who had retired from a shameless life, the other who had resigned her leadership to a younger woman, both now in a backwater of the great main stream, made each other's acquaintance for the first time. He was serious and whimsical and pathetic. How polite they were, these two. What courtesy, what thoughtfulness! He at the head of a table, provided by her; she bearing his name, the one thing that he had given her for a price. They might have been two people at a Swiss hotel who had not been conventionally introduced. *If there had but been the patter of children's feet, shrill laughter, small, clinging hands...*

Spring came a little timidly. Brown fields grew green; larks rose; and hedges watched the stir of earth's bosom with small red eyes. He, inundated with invitations, refused them all. The fascination of his wife held him. He had married her with averted head so that he might not be driven into what was considered, in his young days, to be the degradation of work. Even thirty years ago England was a monarchy with a handful of democrats. To-day she is the greatest of all

democracies, patronizingly maintaining a monarch. He found this charming woman more entertaining, wittier, better read, of wider sympathies and infinitely more beautiful than all the women upon whom he had lavished her money. The paradox, the hideous sarcasm of it, hit him hard. He found himself falling in love with his wife, yes, falling in love. But every time he was moved to tell her so the words died on his lips. So many times he had said those very words before—but this woman was his wife. It was too late. Both had lost the spring and summer. There are no fires in the autumn!

POOR devil of a too-wise man! In those elaborately thoughtful quarters of his he spent half his nights with open eyes beginning all his unspoken sentences with "If only—" He was old, old. Spring and summer had been frittered away; only the autumn and winter were left. His hair was white where there was any of it, and hers was white, who had so much; and the patter of feet would never wake the echoes of that old house. They were strangers who had ripened into friends, these two, and that was all. He owed her everything and could give nothing in return. He had sacrificed everything to find Heaven—self-respect, gratitude, duty. He had never found anything but a painted Paradise at best, and now he stood in Hell.

Still, this was a harbor if not a home, and she who was not a wife was an indescribably charming and sympathetic and forgiving companion, and so the days passed peacefully enough, and he and she practised no foolish and pathetic methods of fighting against them. They grew old gracefully. They religiously steered clear of personalities, discussed no contentious topics and stuck to generalities. God came back into the prodigal's heart.

But often, so often, he stood and faced the night at his window and cried out: "Had I but been born the son of a middle-class man!" And she, in her lonely room, sighed: "To have been born the daughter of a poor man!"



The Crime Club

By Frank Froest

THIS begins a series of detective-mystery stories along brand new lines, by a writer new to readers in the United States.

ILLUSTRATED BY RICHARD CULTER

YOU will seek in vain, in any book of reference, for the name of the Crime Club. Purists may find a reason in the fact that a club without subscriptions, officials or headed notepaper is no club at all. The real explanation probably is that the club avoids advertisement. It is content to know that even in its obscurity, it is the most exclusive club in the world.

No member is ever elected; no member ever resigns. Yet the wrong man is never admitted, the wrong man rarely excluded. Its members are confined not only to one profession but to the picked even of that profession. Unostentatious as its existence is its headquarters—a little hotel handy to the Strand wherein some years ago Forrester and Blake of the C. I. D. had discovered a discreet manager, a capable chef and a back dining-room.

The progress of time, and the tact of the manager, had conceded a sitting-room with a dozen or so big and deep arm-chairs. From noon onwards, the two apartments had become sacred to the Crime Club.

Quiet, comfortable-looking men dropped in for luncheon or dinner and a chat that was as likely to cover gardening or politics as murder or burglary. Perhaps the only trait that they showed in common was some indefinable trick of humor that lurked in their faces. An experienced detective has seen too much to take himself too seriously.

The rank and file of the world's detective services have no entrée to the Crime Club. Only men whose repute is beyond suspicion are among its members. Strictly, it is an international club, for although its most determined frequenters are a dozen Scotland Yard men, there is always a sprinkling of detectives from abroad to be found there. You may see perhaps a thin, hawk-faced Pinkerton man grimly chaffing an excitable, black-bearded little Italian—none other than the redoubtable Cipriano of the Italian Secret Service. In a group about the fire are Kuntze of Berlin—a stolid, bovine-faced man whose looks belie the subtlety of a tempered brain; Heldon Foyle, the tall, urbane superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Department; a jolly-faced, fat

officer from the Central Office in New York; the slim-built, gray-mustached Commissioner of the great over-seas police force—himself an old Scotland Yard hand; a sprucely-dressed Frenchman from the Service de Sureté; a provincial chief constable; a private inquiry agent so fastidious about the selection of his clients that he is making only a couple of thousand a year instead of the five thousand that could be his if he did not object to dirty hands; and a couple of chief-inspectors from the Yard.

Search the newspaper files of the world and you will here and there get a hint of remarkable things done by these men—of supreme feats of organization in pursuit, of subtleties in unveiling mysteries, of bull-dog courage and tenacity, of quick-witted resource in emergencies. You will not find all the truth there because there are sometimes happenings of which it is not well all the truth should be known; but you will gather much of what manner of men they are.

Sometimes, over coffee and cigars, the talk may drift to some of the affairs of the profession. Some of these, not always told in the words of the original narrator, find a place in the present chronicles. The strange case which centered about the death of Madeline Fulford is one of the most remarkable of these.....

A BLUE haze of smoke which even the electric fans could not entirely dispel overhung the smoking saloon of the *S. S. Columbia*. With the procrastination of confirmed poker players, they had lingered at the game till well after midnight. Silvervale cut off a remark to glance at his cards. He yawned as he flung them down.

"She can call herself Eleanor de Reszke or anything else she likes on the passenger-list," he declared languidly, "but she's Madeline Fulford all right, all right. She's come on a bit in the last two years, though she always was a bit of a high stepper. Wonder if de Reszke knows anything about Crake?"

Across the table a sallow-faced man whose play had hitherto evinced no lack of nerve, threw in a full hand, aces

up, on a moderate rise. No one save himself knew that he had worsted one of the best of average poker hands. His fingers, lean and tremulous, drummed mechanically on the table. For a second a pair of lusterless, frowning blue eyes rested on Silvervale's face.

"So that's the woman who was in the Crake case? It was her evidence that got the poor devil seven years, wasn't it? As I remember the newspaper reports, she was a kind of devil incarnate."

"I wouldn't go as far as that," observed Silvervale drily, "and I'm a newspaper man myself. I didn't hear the trial, but I saw her afterwards. It never came out why she gave him away. There must have been some mighty strong motive, for he had spent thousands on her. I guess there was another woman at the bottom of it. Anyway, her reasons don't matter. She cleared an unpleasant trickster out of the way and put him where he belongs. But for her he might have been carrying on that swindling bank of his now—I'll take three cards."

The man with the pale blue eyes jerked his head abruptly. "Yes, he's where he belongs," he asserted, "and she—why, she's Mrs. de Reszke and a deuced pretty woman....Hello!" He broke off short, staring with fascinated eyes beyond Silvervale. The journalist swerved round in his chair to meet a livid face and furious eyes within a foot of his own.

It was Richard de Reszke himself. He had not made himself popular on ship-board—indeed, it is doubtful if he could ever have been popular in any society. A New Yorker who had made himself a millionaire in the boot trade, he was ungracious both in manner and speech. He had entered the saloon unperceived, and now his tall, usually shambling figure was unwontedly erect. His left hand—big and gnarled, it was—fell with an ape-like clutch upon Silvervale's shoulder.

"You scandal-mongering little set," he snarled with a vicious tightening of the lips under his gray mustache. "By God, you'll admit you're a liar, or I'll shake the life out of you."

The chair fell with a crash as he pulled the journalist forward. Men

sprang to intervene between the two. Cursing and struggling, de Reszke was forced back, but it took four men to do it. Suddenly his resistance relaxed.

"That's all right," he said quietly.

"We'll let it go for now." A fresh access of passion shook him, and he shot out a malignant oath. "I'll make you a sorry man yet for this, Mr. Silvervale."

The journalist had picked up the fallen chair. His face was flushed, but he answered coolly. "I apologize," he said quietly. "I had no business to talk of your wife."

"Then in front of these gentlemen you'll admit you're a liar."

"I guess not. I am sorry I said anything, but what I did say was the truth. Mrs. de Reszke was Madeline Fulford and she it was who gave evidence against Crake."

The little group between the men stiffened in expectation of a new outburst. But none came. The stoop had come back to de Reszke's shoulders and he lifted one hand wearily to tug at his gray mustache. Then without another word he turned and shambléd from the room.

There was a momentary silence, broken at last by the scratch of a match as some one lit a cigarette. The embarrassment was broken and three or four men spoke at once.

"Look out, Silvervale," said Bowen, a young New York banker. "Lucky for you we touch Southampton to-morrow. The old man is a-gunning for you sure. His face meant murder."

"Thanks. I'll look after my own

corpse," drawled the journalist. He spoke with an ease he did not entirely feel. "I suppose the game's broken up now. I've had enough excitement for one night. I'm going to turn in."

THE short remainder of the voyage, in spite of de Reszke's threat and the prophecy of Bowen, passed without incident. It

was not till he was back in London that the episode was recalled to Silvervale's mind. The boat train had reached Waterloo in the early afternoon, and at six o'clock, Silvervale, for all that his two months' vacation had yet three days to run, had been drawn into the stir and stress of Fleet Street.

The harassed news editor of the *Morning Wire* was working at speed through a basket of accumulated copy. He paused long enough to shake hands and exchange a remark or two, and then resumed his labors with redoubled ardor, for he was eager to hand over the reins to his night assistant.

He snatched irritably at a piece of tape that was handed to him by a boy, and then adjusting his pince-nez glanced at Silvervale.

"Here's a funny thing, Silver. Didn't you come back on the *Columbia*? Read that."

Silvervale took the thin strip and slowly read it through.

Five-forty: Mrs. Eleanor de



He had entered the saloon unperceived.

Reszke, the wife of an American millionaire, was this afternoon found shot dead in her sitting-room at the Palatial Hotel. She had been at the hotel only an hour or two, having arrived by the *Columbia* from New York this morning.

Hardened journalist though he was, with a close acquaintance with many of the bizarre aspects of tragedy, Silvervale could not repress a little shudder. Here was a grim sequel to the careless gossip of the smoking saloon—a sequel for which he was in a degree responsible. He traced the sequence of events clearly in his imagination from that moment when de Reszke first heard that his wife had been the associate and betrayer of a swindler, to the ultimate gust of passion that must have led to the tragedy when it was borne upon him that the statement was the truth.

"Yes. It's—it's queer, Danvers," he said, unsteadily, "—deuced queer." Then with a realization that the news editor was regarding him with curiosity: "I'm sorry, old man; you mustn't ask me to handle the story. You'd better put Blackwood on it. It should be a good yarn, but I'm rather mixed up in it. I may be called as a witness."

Few things are calculated to startle the editor of a great morning newspaper, but this time Silvervale had certainly succeeded. To tell the truth, the young man was astonished at his own scruples. He made haste to escape before he could be questioned.

Out in Fleet Street he hailed a taxi and was driven straight to the Palatial Hotel. A couple of men were in the big hall smilingly parrying the questions of half a dozen journalists. One of them shook his head as Silvervale pushed his way to the front.

"Good Lord! Here's another vulture. It's no good, Mr. Silvervale. We've just been telling your friends here that we don't know anything. The doctors have not finished their examination yet."

"But it looks like suicide, Mr. Forrester," interposed one of the crowd. "You've found a pistol."

A knowing smile extended on Detective-Inspector Forrester's genial countenance. "That wont work, boys," he re-

monstrated with a reproving shake of his head. "You don't draw me."

Silvervale managed to get the detective aside. "You must give me five minutes," he whispered hastily. "I know who killed her. I came over in the same boat."

Forrester thrust his hands deep in his trousers pockets. His brow puckered a little, and he studied the journalist's face thoughtfully. For all his casual unworried air his instinct rather than anything definite in the preliminary investigations had warned him that the case was likely to prove a difficult one. A detective—the real detective—is quite as willing to take short cuts in his work as any other business man.

"The deuce you do," he said. "Come, let's get out of this. Half a moment, Roker."

His assistant disengaged himself from the other newspaper men, and Forrester led the way to the lift. At the third floor they emerged. Very quietly the door of the lift closed behind them, and half unconsciously Silvervale found himself tip-toeing along the corridor, although in any event the soft carpet would have deadened all sound. A man standing stiffly against a white door flung it open as they approached. Within, a couple of men were bending over something on a couch, and two more were busy near the window overlooking the river. No one looked up. Forrester passed straight through to another and smaller room and fitted his burly form to a basket armchair. He waved Silvervale to another one.

"And now fire away, sonny," he said.

CONCISELY, in quick, succinct sentences, Silvervale told his story. As he concluded, Forrester drew a worn briar pipe from his pocket and packed it with a meditative forefinger.

"Are you writing anything about this?"

"Not a word. I know I may be wanted as a witness."

"That's true." The Inspector puffed contemplatively for a moment. "Then there's this I don't mind telling you: That chap downstairs was right. There was a pistol—a five-chambered revolver, found clutched in that woman's hand,



Silently he compared the finger-print impressions with those on the book.

But de Reszke is missing. He never came with her to the hotel."

"Then you think it is suicide after all?"

The detective leaned forward and leveled a heavy forefinger at his questioner. "You've earned a right to know something of this business, Mr. Silvervale. It's no suicide. The body was discovered by the maid just after five o'clock.

No one had heard a shot, but that's nothing—these walls are pretty well sound-proof. The dead woman was lying on a couch with the revolver in her hand—so the girl's story runs. She thought her mistress was asleep, and it was only when she touched her and the weapon fell to the floor that she discovered she was dead. She was shot through the left eye."

"I see. You mean a woman wouldn't kill herself that way. She'd poison or drown herself—some bloodless death."

"There's something in that, but it proves little by itself. But there are not many people who'd shoot themselves deliberately in the eye. It's curious, but there—But to my mind the conclusive thing is the pistol.

Any student of medical jurisprudence will tell you that it usually needs considerable force to relax the grip of a corpse from anything it is clutching at the moment of death. No, Mr. Silvervale, this is a carefully calculated murder, if ever there was one. And I think your information will help us to fix the man. Roker,"—he addressed his companion,—“you might get hold of the maid again. Get a full description of de Reszke, and there's bound to be a photograph somewhere. Take 'em along to the Yard and have 'em circulated. We merely want to question him, mind. Now, Mr. Silvervale, we'll see what the doctors say."

The two doctors, the police divisional surgeon and the medical man who had been first called on the discovery of the murder, had finished their examination as Forrester passed into the next room. He spoke a few words in an undertone to the surgeon, who nodded assentingly.

The two men by the window were still busy. Now Silvervale had an opportunity to see what occupied them. They were busy with scale plans of the room whereon were shown the relative positions of everything in the room, marked out even to inches. Photographs, he surmised, must already have been taken.

Forrester seemed to have forgotten Silvervale's existence. As soon as the doctors had gone, the Inspector had extracted a small bottle of black powder from his pocket and sprinkled it delicately over the open pages of a book resting on a table a couple of yards from the couch. Presently he blew the stuff away. The finger-prints had developed in relief on the white margin.

"There's a blotting pad over there on the writing-table, Mr. Silvervale," he said; "would you mind helping me for a moment?"

Forrester was cool and businesslike, yet it was very gently that he lifted the dead white hands and impressed the finger tips on a sheet of paper on top of the pad. Silently he compared the impressions with those on the book.

"I'm only an amateur at this finger-print game," he said at last. "Grant ought to have been here. See if you make these prints agree, Mr. Silvervale."

Silvervale carried the book to the window and bent his brows over it. He found it slow work, but at last he raised his head. "These are her thumb prints on the outer margin," he said. "The one at the bottom of the book is not hers."

"That's how I make it. Now we can get a fair theory of how the thing was done: Mrs. de Reszke was on the couch reading. The murderer entered softly from the corridor, closing the door behind him. She looked up and placed the book beside her. He must have fired point blank. Then to work out his idea of suicide he placed the pistol in her hand, and picking up the book put it on the table. Here's where we start from—a piece of indisputable proof when we catch the murderer."

A little contempt at the apparent deliberation of the detective—at the finesse wasted on what seemed an obvious case—had come to Silvervale's mind. He hazarded a suggestion; Forrester grinned.

"I'll bet a dollar I know what you're thinking. I'm wasting my time meddling with details while the murderer's escaping. Do you know I've had five men here besides these,"—he nodded towards the draughtsmen,— "questioning everyone who might know anything about the case? Mrs. de Reszke has received no one; no one resembling her husband has been seen in the hotel. Do you know that there is not one railway station in London, not one hotel that is not even now being searched for a trace of de Reszke? We are not so slow as our critics think. If de Reszke did this murder he won't get away, you can take it from me. There's plenty of people trying to catch him—I've seen to that."

He checked himself suddenly as if he realized that he had for a while lost his wonted imperturbability. "I thought you knew better than to run away with the delusion that all we've got to do is to arrest a man we've fixed our suspicions on. In point of fact it is often more difficult to get material evidence of a moral certainty than to start without any facts at all."

He moved heavily to the door: "I'm going on to the Yard," he said. "Care to come?"

AS they turned under the big wrought-iron arch that spans the entrance to New Scotland Yard, Silvervale noted that they avoided the little back door that leads to the Criminal Investigation Department and went up by the broad main entrance to those rooms on one of the top-most floors devoted to the Finger-print Department.

Grant, the chief of the department, a black-mustached giant with lined forehead and shrewd, penetrative eyes, was seated at a low table pushing a magnifying glass across a sheet of paper. Forrester had clapped him heavily on the shoulder and he wheeled around frowningly.

"It's you, is it?" he growled. "One of these days you'll play that trick too often, my lad. Of course, you come when everyone's gone home. What do you want?"

"Don't be peevish, old man," smiled Forrester, and seated himself on the

table. "You'll be sorry you weren't more kind to me when the daisies are growing over my grave."

"Fungi, you mean," retorted Grant acidly. "What's the bother?"

"This." Forrester produced the book he had found at the hotel and the scrap of paper on which he had taken the murdered woman's finger-prints. "It's the Palatial Hotel business. The prints on the paper are those of Mrs. de Reszke. They agree with those on the sides of the book. The one at the bottom of the book is that of the murderer."

"H'm." Grant glanced at the prints and gave a corroborative nod. "You'll want photographs of these, I suppose?"

"Yes—as soon as I can get them. I suppose you'll have to have a search to make sure that the other print isn't on the records. It's unlikely, though."

"That will have to wait. I'll have the photographs taken and sent down to you as soon as they're ready. Now go away."

He dismissed them abruptly, and they could hear his deep voice thundering into the telephone receiver as they made their exit. He was ordering the wire to be sent recalling one of the staff photographers. As in any other big business firm, the ordinary staff of Scotland Yard goes off duty at six.

DOWNSTAIRS in his own room, Forrester found three or four subordinates and a handful of reports and messages awaiting him. His leisurely manner dropped from him. He became brisk, official, brusque. A shorthand clerk with open note-book was waiting, and to him the chief inspector poured out the bulk of his instructions to be forwarded by telegraph or telephone. Silvervale realized how vast and complex were the resources that were being handled to solve the mystery.

Forrester dismissed the clerk at last and turned abruptly on the waiting men. There was not waste of words on either side. As the final subordinate left the room Forrester yawned and stretched himself wearily.

"That's all right," he said. "I guess we can't do anything more for an hour or two. It may interest you, Mr. Silvervale, to know that de Reszke has booked a

passage back to New York in his own name, by the boat that leaves Liverpool the day after to-morrow. He called at the White Star offices at five o'clock. It's a bluff, I guess, and pretty obvious at that. He thinks we'll concentrate attention on that scent while he slips some other way. Yes—what is it?"

Some one had torn the door open hurriedly. A young man, tall and sparse, whispered a few words into Forrester's ear. The chief inspector sat up as though galvanized. His hand searched for the telephone.

"Get him put through here. . . . You have a taxicab ready, Bolt. You may have to come with me." The young man vanished and Forrester spoke into the telephone. "Hello, that you, Gould? . . . Yes, this is Forrester. . . . At the Metz, you say. . . . How many men have you? All right, I'll be along straight away. Good-by."

"Located him?" ventured Silvervale.

"Yes." Forrester's brow was puckered. "He's at the Metz under his own name. Hanged if I can make it out. He's either mad or he's got the nerve of the very devil. Come on!"

Bolt was awaiting them in a taxicab outside, which whirled them swiftly away as they took their seats. They drew up in Piccadilly, a hundred yards or so from the severe arches of the great hotel and walked forward till they were met by a bronzed, well-dressed man of middle age who nodded affably and fell into step with them.

"Well, Gould?" queried Forrester.

"Everything serene, sir. He's gone in to dinner. There's two of our men dining at the next table."

"That's all right then. I'll see the manager and fix things."

A commissioner pushed back the revolving door and the four walked in.

FIVE minutes later a waiter crossed the softly lighted dining-room with a card. It did not contain Forrester's name—nor indeed that of anyone he knew. Nor did de Reszke seem to know it, for he frowned as the waiter presented it to him.

"I don't know any Mr. Grahame Johnston," he said. "This isn't for me."

The waiter was deferential. "The gentleman said, 'Mr. John de Reszke,' sir. He says it's very urgent, and wants you to spare him a minute in the smoking-room."

The millionaire slowly divested himself of his serviette, and rising, shambled after the waiter. Curiously enough, one of the diners at the adjoining table seemed simultaneously to have occasion to leave the room by the same exit.

Forrester and his companions were waiting in a small room which had been placed at their disposal. As de Reszke was ushered in the first face he caught sight of was that of Silvervale. His face lowered and he paused on the threshold.

Quickly and deftly Gould shouldered by him as though to pass out. De Reszke gave way and the detective closed the door and leaned nonchalantly against it.

"Mr. de Reszke," said Forrester quickly. "I am a police officer. Your wife has been murdered since her arrival in London. If you wish to make any statements as to your movements you may do so, though I must warn you that unless you can definitely convince me that you had no hand in the murder I may have to arrest you."

Blankly, uncomprehendingly, de Reszke stared in front of him as though he had not heard. His lean fingers clenched and unclenched, and his eyes had become dull. The police officers, although neither their attitudes nor their faces showed it, had braced themselves to overcome him at the first hint of resistance. But this man had no appearance of being the madman that Silvervale had pictured. The life seemed to have gone out of him.

"You heard me?" questioned Forrester sharply.

"I heard you," said de Reszke dully. "You say Nell's dead—no, not Nell—her name's not Eleanor; it's Madeline—Madeline Fulford; that's it—she's been murdered? I heard—ha! ha! ha!" He broke into shrill, uncanny laughter, and then pressing both hands to his temples pitched forward heavily to the floor.

"A doctor, some one," ordered Forrester, and Gould vanished. Unconscious, de Reszke was lifted to a couch by the

other three. Forrester shrugged his shoulders. "Looks like a bad job," he muttered.

The doctor summoned by Gould confirmed the suspicion. "It's a paralytic stroke," he explained. "I doubt if he'll ever get over it. You gentlemen are friends of his?"

Forrester inserted a couple of fingers in his waistcoat pocket. "Not exactly," he said. "We are police officials. There is my card."

"Ah!" The doctor's eyebrows jerked up. "Well, it's no business of mine. Of course, it's obvious that he's had a shock."

"Of course," agreed Forrester.

THE inevitable search of de Reszke's room and baggage had been conducted with thoroughness, but it yielded nothing that seemed of importance to the investigation. Forrester voiced his misgivings as he walked back to Scotland Yard with Silvervale.

"This business is running too smoothly. I don't like it. I feel there's a smack in the eye coming from somewhere. There's several little odds and ends to be cleared up. It would have been easier if he hadn't had that stroke."

"There's the finger-print on the book," ventured Silvervale.

"Yes. I took de Reszke's and sent Bolt with them to the Yard. Grant will have fixed all that up by the time we get there."

Grant was waiting for them when they arrived. On his table he had spread out a series of enlargements of finger-prints. He shook his head gravely at Forrester. "It's no good, old chap," he said. "These things you sent up by Bolt don't tally."

Forrester, suddenly arrested with his overcoat half off, felt his jaw drop. For a second he frowned upon Grant. Then he writhed himself free of the garment. "Don't tally!" he repeated. "You're joking, Grant. They must."

"Well, they don't."

The chief detective-inspector brought his fist down with a bang on the table. He laid no claim to the super-human intelligence of the story-book detectives. Therefore he was considerably annoyed

at this abrupt discovery of a vital flaw in the chain of evidence that connected de Reszke with the murder. He had no personal feeling in the matter. It was merely the discontent of the business man at finding that work had been wasted. He brought his fist down with a bang on the table.

"It beats me," he declared viciously. "It fairly beats me. Who else could have done it? Who else had a motive?"

Grant stole out of the room, and Silvervale remained discreetly silent. Forrester rested his elbows on the table and his chin in his cupped hands, striving to recall some avenue of investigation that he might have overlooked.

Suddenly his face lightened and he jerked himself from his chair with a swift movement of his whole body. Ignoring the journalist, he rushed from the room. It was long before he returned. When he did he was accompanied by Grant.

"Tell me,"—he addressed Silvervale,—"did you ever see Crane?"

The other shook his head. "I was out of town when he was tried. It was after the case was over that I interviewed Madeline Fulford."

Grant was frowning. "If I hadn't seen the records, Forrester, I'd say you were mad. It's the most unheard of thing...."

"We'll see whether I'm mad or not," said the chief inspector grimly. He placed a photograph, the official side-and full-face, before Silvervale. "Did you ever see that man before?"

"No."

"Nor that?" The second photograph was a studio portrait with the name of a Strand firm at the bottom. It awoke some vague reminiscence in Silvervale. He held it closer to the light.

"Wait a minute." Grant placed a sheet of paper over the bottom of the face, hiding the mustache and chin. Recollection came to Silvervale in a flash. It was Norman, the man with the lusterless blue eyes, who had commented on Madeline Fulford in the smoking-room of the *Columbia*.

He explained. "The hair's done differently," he added, "but I can recognize the upper part of the face, though he's

older now than when this photograph was taken. Do you think he's mixed up in this?"

"Maybe," answered Forrester enigmatically. "I'll have a man motor down to the prison now"—he was speaking to Grant—"and we'll go on to the Palatial. If I'm any judge he'll still be there. His room was Number 472, almost opposite her suite. I had him questioned, of course, but I never dreamed...."

Silvervale lit a cigarette resignedly. "It's all Greek to me," he complained. "Still, I have no right to ask questions."

"You'll understand in an hour or two," said Forrester. "It would take too long to explain now. Come on and you'll see what you'll see."

It was back to the Palatial Hotel that he took the journalist and a couple of subordinates. There he remained closeted with the manager for five minutes. He reappeared with that functionary, a master-key dangling on his finger.

"Our bird's at home," he said. "Gone to roost, probably."

Nothing more was said till they reached the third floor. The manager led the way until they came opposite a door facing the suite which Mrs. de Reszke had occupied. "This is Number 472," he said in a low voice. "Shall I knock?"

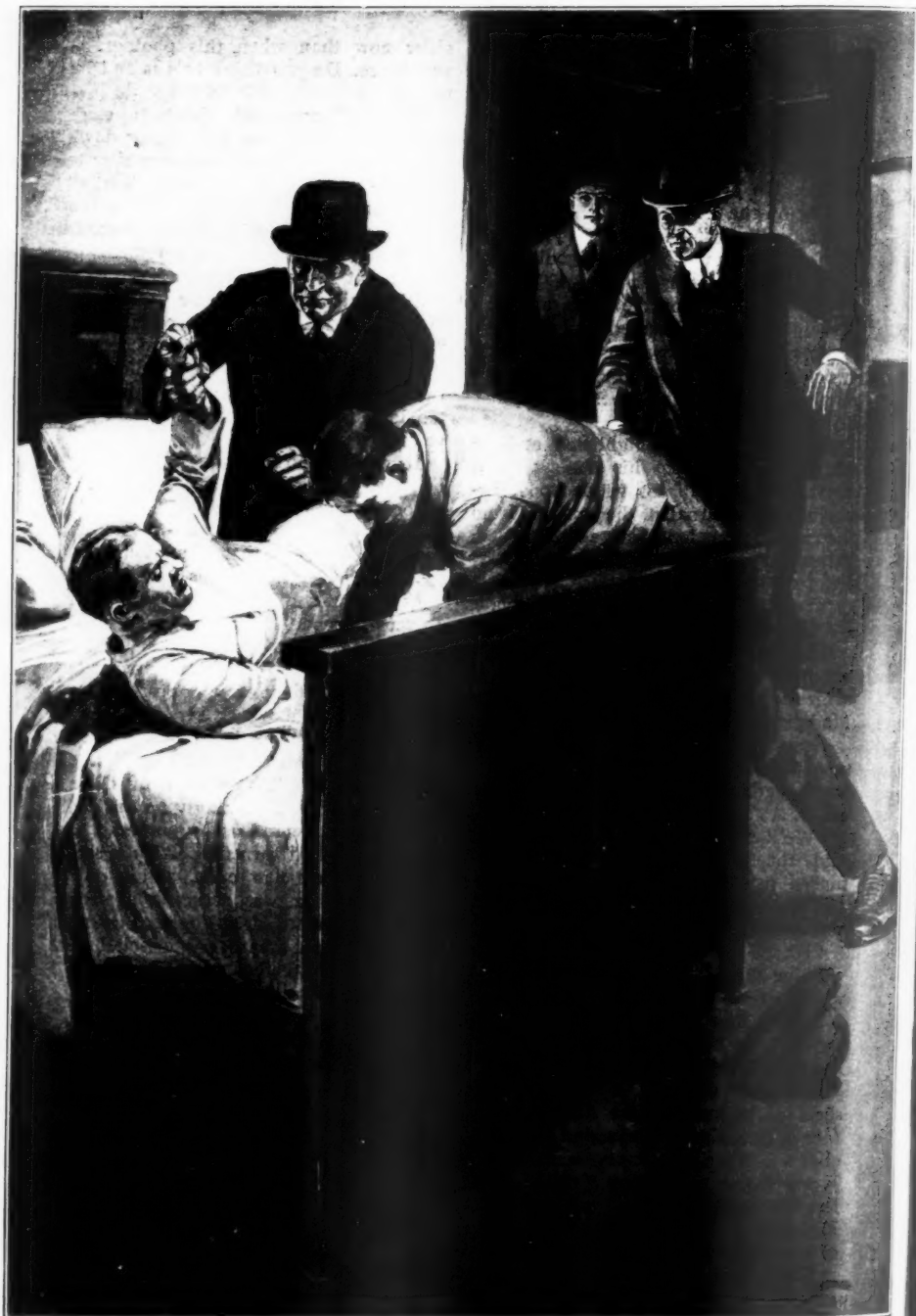
Forrester made a gesture of dissent and his hand fell coaxingly on the door. He made no sound as he pushed a key in the lock and turned it. With a sharp push the door flew open, and a quick, angry question was succeeded by confused sounds of a struggle. The next Silvervale saw was a pajama-clad man being held on the bed with Forrester and a colleague at either wrist.

"I don't know who you are or the meaning of this outrage," he protested angrily. "Some one will have to pay for this."

"Hold on to his hand a minute, Roker," said Forrester, and one of the other detectives seized the wrist he had been grasping.

The chief inspector thrust his hand beneath the pillow and produced a small automatic pistol. "I just grabbed him in time," he said a little breathlessly.

"I want to know—" persisted the prisoner.



Silvare saw a pajama-clad man being held on the bed with Forrester and a colleague at either wrist.

Forrester turned sternly upon him. "I am a police officer," he said. "I am arresting you as an escaped convict, one John Crake."

Something approaching a gleam of interest shot into Crake's lifeless eyes. "So that's it, is it?" he said quietly. "I wonder how you got on to it. According to official reckoning, John Crake has still got five years to serve."

It was impossible to doubt that the man knew the real reason of his arrest, but his manner gave no hint of perturbation. He smiled sardonically as a shiver swept over his slight frame. "I suppose you aren't going to take me to the police station in my sleeping suit. Will these gentlemen allow me to dress?"

At an order from Forrester his clothes were searched and passed to him. He was adjusting his tie with a steady hand when he next shot out a question: "You have something else to say?"

"That can wait," returned Forrester. "Remember that anything you say—"

"I know," interrupted Crake; "you're bound to give that warning. What's the good of all this finesse, Mr.—er—er—Forrester—thank you. I know you want me for murder, and if you want me to say anything you'd better listen now while I'm in the mood. First of all, though, how did you get on to me?"

"There was a finger-print, and we had yours in the records taken when you were on trial for the other thing."

"Look here," Crake spoke as though he were merely an interested observer with no personal concern in the affair. "You'd better tell me the full story, and if there are any gaps I'll fill them in for you. Is that a bargain?"

FORRESTER reflected a moment.

"All right," he agreed with a glance at Silvervale. "There can be no harm in that if you want to know. In the first place, when the woman was found it was easy to penetrate the idea of a clumsy attempt to simulate suicide. We had little to guide us beyond the fact that she was a Mrs. de Reszke who had come over from the States in the *Columbia*. Then Mr. Silvervale, here, turned up with the story of the bother on board, and some of our men picked up the same story

from other passengers we traced out. Of course with de Reszke missing, we went off full cry on a false trail. There were scores of circumstances that pointed against him, and but for the accident of the finger-print it might have looked very ugly."

"I don't understand about that finger-print," remarked Crake.

"It was left on the book the woman had been reading when you placed it on the table. Well, anyway, we got de Reszke, and when I found that his finger-print did not agree with that on the book I was at a dead loss. Of course, I had had your record looked up when Mr. Silvervale identified the dead woman as Madeline Fulford, and I found you were supposed to be still in prison. Naturally, we had not considered you after that. But when I found myself right up against it I took a forlorn chance and compared the prints from the book with those we had of yours. Then Mr. Silvervale identified a portrait of you as that of a passenger named Norman who came over on the *Columbia*. I remembered that a Mr. Norman had been questioned here by our people, and we came on. That's all."

Crake's thin lips curved into a sneer. "It was just the off-chance of your comparing the prints that did it," he said.

Forrester made a disclaiming gesture. "The records would have been searched sooner or later in any event, and we'd have hit on you. It would have taken a day or two, though, and you'd have got a start."

"And you don't know how it is I'm still not in prison, and no one knows I've been at large for a year."

"No, not altogether," admitted the chief detective carelessly. "There's been a change of identity and big bribery somewhere. That's for the prison people to explain." He was careful not to ask any questions.

"Well," said Crake slowly, "I can help you out on that. This is what happened: When that Jezebel there"—he jerked his thumb towards the door—"sold me at the trial I swore I'd get quits with her, if I swung for it." He spat out the words in an even voice that made them ten times more venomous.

"Mark you, in the time that I knew her she had bled me for thousands. Then when the other man turned up she had to get rid of me—and the Old Bailey was the method she chose. I don't know if any of you gentlemen know what hate is—real white-hot, flaming hatred that eats a man's vitals out,"—he choked a little,—“but never mind that. My first idea was to work an escape, for I knew my sentence would not be a light one. I had plenty of money—never mind how I kept it out of other people's clutches.

"There was a man sentenced the same day as myself to two years. There was a certain similarity between us in height and build and physical characteristics—I don't mean that we were in any way doubles, but it was enough to give me an idea when I learned that after the rising of the Court we were to be taken to a fresh prison. In the van I got my chance. I offered him a thousand a year to exchange sentences and identities with me—seven thousand pounds in all. He fell in with the idea, and when we descended in the prison yard he was John Crake and I—I was Isaac Wells. That was his name.

"I had forgotten one thing. When my term—or rather Wells' term—was drawing to a close, my finger-prints were to be taken again as a matter of ordinary routine to be sent to Scotland Yard for comparison. That staggered me at first, but I was not done. My prison record had been good—and that and the fact that I was well educated caused me now and again to be chosen for work in the office. I watched and waited, and pure accident helped me at last. I managed to lay my hands for a few seconds on the prints, the day they were to be sent to London. And the prints that went up were those of the real Wells.

"I wanted to be free—partly for the sake of freedom, mainly to get even with Madeline Fulford. Prison had altered my appearance in some respects, and I did what I could myself. I went trouble you with my adventures in tracking her down. I found the man for whom I had

been sacrificed had committed suicide in Paris, and from there I followed her all over the world, sometimes going on a blind, sometimes getting a hint here or there that satisfied me I should get her sooner or later. I heard at last that she had married de Reszke, and I reached New York a day before they sailed for England.

"There was a vacant berth on the *Columbia* and I took it. I kept out of her sight, but I watched for my chance like a cat. She never seemed to be alone, and it was not my purpose to take any risk of involving myself if it could be avoided. Then there was the row in the smoking-room. That frightened me for a while, but when I saw that Mr. Silvervale did not recognize me I did not mind.

"I was in the next carriage to her in the boat-train from Southampton to London and my taxicab was close behind hers when she arrived at the Palatial. I took this room on the same floor as her suite—and you know the rest."

The scratching of a pencil as a detective who had followed Crake's statement in shorthand put the finishing touches to his notes was the only sound for a few seconds after Crake had finished. The manager fished in his pocket and produced a letter which he handed to Forrester.

"I forgot to give you this," he said. "It was left in the office early this evening. It is addressed to Mrs. de Reszke."

Forrester broke the seal and read the letter, silently at first and then aloud:

MADAM—You have no moral claim upon me since your admission yesterday that you are the infamous woman formerly known as Madeline Fulford. I then told you as plainly as possible that you need look to me no longer for support. I have now, however, thought the question over and will allow you three thousand dollars per annum, paid quarterly, on condition first that you assume some other name than mine, secondly that you make no attempt in future to molest or communicate with me either in person or by letter.

I shall instruct my lawyer that the foregoing payment is to be made to you. I sail for New York in two days' time.—R. DE RESZKE.

NEXT MONTH: "The Maker of Diamonds."

The Story: *Hepsey Burke is a David Harum in petticoats, written by the brother of the man who originated the lovable and amusing David.*

When Donald Maxwell, the young minister from the city, comes to Durford, Hepsey takes him under her wing. She teaches him how to milk a Jersey cow, how to keep from treading on the despotic Senior Warden's mental corns, and why he should keep clear of the prehensile glances of the Senior Warden's daughter, Virginia Bascom, who is "in" the town's "400" of thirty people and wouldn't be caught fraternizing with her thirty-first townsman for worlds.

Hepsey is of the sort which knows how to get rid of unwelcome visitors. She hangs out an old scarlet fever sign. One relative, who had come to stay a month, got out of the "hack," saw that sign, and then as Hepsey says: "I wish you could have seen her face. I wouldn't have believed so much could be done with so few features."

Her shrewd eyes plumb the young minister's secret when she finds the miniature of a beautiful girl on his dresser, so she prepares for the row she knows will come when Virginia Bascom hears that he is already engaged to a young woman in the city. Hepsey gains the help of the Junior Warden, her next farm neighbor, who is trying to make her change her widowhood for second wifehood.

HEPSEY BURKE

By Frank N. Westcott

ILLUSTRATED BY FREDERICK R. GRUGER

CHAPTER VI

THE MISSIONARY TEA

"H M!" Mrs. Burke remarked to Maxwell abruptly one day during supper. "We haven't had a missionary tea since you came, and I think it's high time we did."

"What sort of a missionary tea do you mean?" the parson inquired.

"Well," Mrs. Burke responded, "our missionary teas combine different attractions. We get together and look over each other's clothes; that's the first thing; then some one reads a paper reportin' how things is goin' in Zanzibar, or what's doin' in Timbuctoo. Then we look over the old clothes sent in for missionaries, mend 'em up, and get 'em ready to send off. Then we have tea and cake. I've had my misgivin' for some time that perhaps we cared more for the

tea and cake than we did for the heathen; but of course I put such a wicked thought aside."

"But I suppose the tea helps to get people together and be more sociable?"

"Certainly. The next best thing to religion is a cup of strong tea and a frosted cake, to make us country people friends. Both combined can't be beat. But you ought to see the things that have been sent in this last week for the missionary box. There's a smoking jacket, two pairs of golf-trousers, several pairs of mismatched gloves, a wonderful lot of undarned stockings, bonnets and underclothes to burn, two jackets and a bathin' suit. I wonder what people think missionaries are doin' most of the time!"

ON the day appointed for the missionary tea the ladies were to assemble at Thunder Cliff at four o'clock; and when Maxwell came home, before the

advent of the first guest, he seemed somewhat depressed; and Mrs. Burke inquired:

"Been makin' calls on your parish-ioners?"

"Yes, I have made a few visits."

"Now you must look more cheerful, or somebody'll suspect that you don't always find parish calls the joy of your life."

"It's so difficult to find subjects of conversation that they are interested in. I simply couldn't draw out Mrs. Snodgrass, for instance."

"Well, when you've lived in the country as long as I have, you'll find that the one unfaillin' subject of interest is symptoms—mostly dyspepsy and liver complaint. If you had known enough to have started right with Elmira Snodgrass, she would have thawed out at once. Elmira is always lookin' for trouble as the sparks fly upwards, or thereabouts. She'd crawl through a barbed wire fence if she couldn't get at it any other way. She always chews a pill on principle, and then she calls it a dispensation of Providence, and wonders why she was ever born to be tormented."

"In that case," laughed Maxwell, "I'd better get some medical books and read up on symptoms. By the by, is there any particular program for this missionary meeting, Mrs. Burke?"

"Yes, Virginia Bascom's goin' to read a paper called 'The Christian Mother as a Missionary in her own Household.' To be sure, Ginty's no Christian Mother, or any other kind of a mother; but she's as full of enthusiasm as a shad is of bones. She'd bring up any child while you wait, and not charge a cent. There goes the bell, so please excuse me."

THE guests were received by Mrs. Burke. Miss Bascom entered the parlor with a portentous bundle of manuscript under her arm, and greeted Donald with a radiant smile. Pulling a pansy from a bunch in her dress, she adjusted it in his buttonhole with the happy shyness of a young kitten chasing its tail. After the others had assembled, they formed a circle to inspect the clothing which had been sent in. There was a general buzz of conversation.

As they were busily going through the garments, Virginia remarked, "Are all these things to go to the missionaries at Tien Tsin?" and she adjusted her lorgnette to inspect the heap.

"Yes," Mrs. Burke responded wearily, "and I hope they'll get what comfort they can out of 'em."

"You don't seem to be very appreciative, Mrs. Burke," Virginia reproved.

"Well, I suppose I ought to be satisfied," Hepsey replied. "But it does seem as if most people give to the Lord what they can't use for themselves any longer—as they would to a poor relation that's worthy, but not to be coddled by too much charity."

"I think these things are quite nice enough for the missionaries," Virginia retorted. "They are thankful for anything."

"Yes, I know," Mrs. Burke replied calmly. "Missionaries and their families have no business to have any feelings that can't be satisfied with second-hand clothes, and no end of good advice on how to spend five cents freely but not extravagantly."

"Might I inquire," asked Miss Bascom meekly, "what you would send?"

"Certainly! I'd send a twenty-five-cent scent bag, made of silk and filled with patchouli-powder," said Hepsey, squarely.

"Well," Virginia added devoutly, "sachet bags may be well enough in their place; but they wont feed missionaries, or clothe them, or save souls, you know, Mrs. Burke."

"Did anybody say they would?" Mrs. Burke inquired. "I shouldn't particularly care to see missionaries clothed in sachet bags myself; the smell might drive the heathen to desperation. But do we always limit our spending money to necessary clothes and food? The truth is, we all of us spend anything we like as long as it goes on our backs, or down our throats; but the moment it comes to supportin' missionaries we think 'em worldly and graspin' if they show any ambition beyond second-hand clothes."

"Do you live up to your preachin', Mrs. Burke?" a little sallow faced woman inquired from a dark corner of the room.

"Oh, no; it hits me just as hard as anybody else, as Martin Luther said. But I've got a proposition to make: if you'll take these things you brought, back with you, and wear 'em for a week just as they are, and play you're the missionaries, I'll take back all I've said."

As, however, there was no response to this challenge, the box was packed, and the cover nailed down.

(It is perhaps no proper part of this story to add, that its opening on the other side of the world was attended by the welcome and surprising fragrance of patchouli, emanating from a little silk sachet secreted among the more workaday gifts.)

THE ladies then adjourned to the front piazza, where the supper was served.

When the dishes had been cleared away, the guests adjusted their chairs and assumed attitudes of expectant attention while Virginia stood up and shyly unrolled her manuscript, with a placid, self-conscious smile on her countenance. She apologized for her youth and inexperience, with a moving glance towards her pastor, and then got down to business. She began with the original and striking remark that it was the chief glory and function of woman to be a home-maker. She continued with something to the effect that the woman who forms the character of her children in the sanctity of the home-life rules the destinies of the world. Then she made a fetching allusion to the "Mother of the Gracchi," and said something about jewels. Nobody knew who the "Gracchi" were, but they supposed that they must be some relatives of Virginia's who lived in Boston.

She asserted that the modern methods of bringing up children were all wrong. She drew a striking picture of the ideal home in which children always stood modestly and reverently by their parents' chairs, consumed with anxiety to be of some service to their elders. They were always to be immaculately neat in their attire, and gentle in their ways. The use of slang was quite beneath them.

These ideal children were always to spend their evenings at home in the

perusal of instructive books, and the pursuit of useful knowledge. Then, when half past seven arrived, they were to rise spontaneously and promptly, and bid their parents an affectionate good-night, and retire to their rooms, where, having said their prayers and recited the golden text, they were to get into bed.

PORTIONS of Virginia's essay were quite moving. Speaking of the rewards which good mothers reap, in the virtues and graces of their dutiful offspring, she said:

"What mother does not feel a thrill of exquisite rapture as she fondly gazes into the depths of her baby's eyes and sees there the budding promise of glorious womanhood. What mother does not watch the development of her little son with wondering pride, as she notes his manly, simple ways, his gentle reverence, his tender, modest behavior. What mother—"

Here Virginia came to an abrupt stop, for there was a terrible racket somewhere overhead on the piazza roof; a rope was suddenly dropped over the edge of the eaves, and almost immediately a pair of very immodestly bare legs were lowered into view, followed by the rest of Nickey Burke's person, attired in his nightshirt. It was the work of a moment for the nimble boy to slide down the rope onto the ground. But, as he landed on his feet, finding himself in the august presence of the missionary circle, he remarked "Gee Whitaker bee's wax!" and prudently took to his heels, and sped around the house as if he had been shot out of a gun.

Several segments of the circle giggled violently. The essayist, though very red, made a brave effort to ignore the highly indecorous interruption, and so continued with trembling tones:

"What more beautiful and touching thing is there, than the innocent, unsullied modesty of childhood? One might almost say—"

But she never said it, for here again she was forced to pause while another pair of immodest legs appeared over the eaves, much fatter and shorter than the preceding pair. These belonged to Nickey's boon-companion, the gentle



"Nicholas Burke, what in the name of conscience does all this idiotic performance mean, I'd like to know?"

Oliver Wendell Jones. The rest of O. W. J. followed in due time; and, quite ignorant of what awaited him, he began his wriggling descent. Most unfortunately for him, the hem of his night-shirt caught on a large nail in the eaves of the roof; and after a frantic, fruitless, and fearful effort to disconnect himself, he hung suspended in the breeze for one awful moment, like a painted cherub on a Christmas tree, while his mother, recognizing her offspring, rose to go to his assistance.

Then there was a frantic yell, a terrible ripping sound, and Oliver Wendell was seen to drop to the ground clad in the sleeves and the front breadth of his shirt, while the entire back of it, from the collar down, waved triumphantly aloft from the eaves. Oliver Wendell Jones picked himself up, unhurt, but much frightened, and very angry: presenting much the aspect of a punctured tire. Then suddenly discovering the proximity of the missionary circle and missing the rear elevation of his shirt about the same time, in the horror and mortification of the moment, he lost his head entirely. Notwithstanding the protests of his pursuing mother, without waiting for his clothes, he fled, "anywhere, anywhere out of the world," bawling with wrath and chagrin.

The entire circumference of the missionary circle now burst into roars of laughter. His mother quickly overtook and captured Oliver, tying her apron around his neck as a concession to the popular prejudice against "the altogether." The gravity of the missionary circle was so thoroughly demoralized that it was impossible to restore order; and Miss Bascom, in the excess of her mortification, stuffed the rest of her manuscript, its eloquent peroration undelivered, into her bag.

WHEN the last guest had departed, Mrs. Burke proceeded to hunt up Nickey, who was dressed and sitting on the top of the corn-crib whittling a stick. His mother began:

"Nicholas Burke, what in the name of conscience does all this idiotic performance mean, I'd like to know?"

Nickey closed his knife. Gazing

serenely down at his mother, he replied:

"How'd I know the blamed missionary push was goin' to meet on the front porch, I'd like to know? Me and Oliver Wendell was just playin' the house was on fire. We'd gone to bed in the front room, and then I told Ollie the fire was breakin' out all around us, and the sparks was flyin', and the stairs was burned away, and there was no way of 'scapin' but to slide down the rope over the roof. I aint to blame for his night-shirt bein' caught on a nail, and bein' ripped off him. Maybe the ladies was awful shocked; but they laughed fit to split their sides just the same. Mr. Maxwell laughed louder than 'em all."

Hepsey retired hastily, lest her face should relax its well-assumed severity.

MAXWELL, in the meantime, felt it a part of his duty to console and soothe the ruffled feelings of his zealous and fluent parishioner, and to Virginia's pride his offer of escort to Willow Bluff was ample reparation for the untoward interruption of her oratory. She delivered into his hands, with sensitive upward glance, the receptacle containing her manuscript, and set a brisk pace, at which she insured the passing of the other guests along the road, making visible her triumph over circumstance and at the same time obviating untimely intrusion of a tête-à-tête conversation.

"You must have given a great deal of time and study to your subject," remarked Maxwell politely.

"It is very near to my heart," responded Virginia, in welling tones. "Home-life is, to me, almost a religion. Do you not feel, with me, that it is the most valuable of human qualities, Mr. Maxwell?"

"I do indeed, and one of the most difficult to reduce to a science,"—she glanced up at him apprehensively, whereupon, lest he seemed to have erred in tact, he added,—"as you made us realize in your paper."

"It is so nice to have your appreciation," she gurgled. "Often I feel it almost futile to try to influence our cold parish audiences; their attitude is so stolid, so unimaginative. As you must have realized, in the pulpit, they are so

hard to lead into untrodden paths. Let us take the way home by the lane," she added coyly, leading off the road down a sheltered by-way.

The lane was rough, and the lady, tightly and lightly shod, stumbled neatly and grasped her escort's arm for support—and retained it for comfort.

"What horizons your sermons have spread before us—and, yet,"—she hesitated,— "I often wonder, as my eyes wander over the congregation, how many besides myself, really hear your message, really see what *you* see. To my life—you will understand?" (she glanced up with tremulous flutter of eyelids) "—you have brought so much helpfulness and— and warmth." She sighed eloquently.

Maxwell was no egotist, and was always prone to see only an impersonal significance in parish compliments. A more self-conscious subject for confidences would have replied less openly.

"I am glad—very glad. But you must not think that the help has been one-sided. You have seconded my efforts so energetically—indeed I don't know what I could have accomplished without such whole-hearted help as you and Mrs. Burke and others have given."

To the optimistic Virginia the division of the loaves and fishes of his personal gratitude was scarcely heeded. She cherished her own portion, and soon magnified it to a basketful—and soon, again, to a monopoly of the entire supply. As he gave her his hand at the door of Willow Bluff, she was in fit state to invest that common act of friendliness with symbolic significance of a rosy future.

CHAPTER VII

HEPSEY GOES A-FISHING

MRS. BURKE seemed incapable of sitting still, with folded hands, for any length of time; and when the stress of her attention to household work, and her devotion to neighborly good deeds relaxed, she turned to knitting wash-rags as a sportsman turns to his gun, or a toper to his cups. She seemed to find more stimulus for thought and more

helpful diversion in the production of one wash-rag than most persons find in a trip abroad.

One day, not very long after the eventful missionary tea, she was sitting in her garden, and knitting more rapidly than usual, as she said to Maxwell:

"What's been the matter with you these last few weeks? You've been lookin' altogether too sober, and you don't eat nothin' to speak of. It must be either liver, or conscience, or heart."

Secretly, she strongly suspected a cardiac affection, of the romantic variety. She intended to investigate.

Donald laughed as he replied:

"Perhaps it's all three together; but I'm all right. There's nothing the matter with me. Every man has his blue days, you know."

"Yes, but the last month you've had too many; and there must be some reason for it. There's nothin' so reffreshin' as gettin' away from your best friends, once in a while. I guess you need a change—pinin' for the city, maybe. Sakes alive! I can't see how folks can live that way—all crowded up together, like a lot of prisons."

"You don't care to visit in the city, then?"

"Not on your life!"

"But a change is good for everyone. Don't you ever get away from Duford for a few weeks?"

"Not very often. What with decidin' where to go, and fussin' to get ready, and shuttin' up the house, it's more trouble than its worth. Then there's so many things to 'tend to when you get home."

"But don't you ever visit relatives?"

"Not on your life, unless I'm subpoenaed by the coroner: though of course we do get together to celebrate a family funeral or a wedding now and then. Visitin' is no joke, I tell you. No sir, I'm old enough to know when I'm well off, and home's the best place for me. I want my own table, and my own bed when it comes night." She paused, and then remarked meditatively:

"I went down to visit in New York once."

"Didn't you enjoy your visit?" Maxwell inquired. "New York's my home-city."



The lane was rough, and the lady, tightly and lightly shod, stumbled neatly and grasped her escort's arm for support—and retained it for comfort.

"Can't say I did, awful much. You see I was visitin' Sally Ramsdale — Sally Greenway that was. They were livin' in an apartment, ninth floor up. In the first place, I didn't like goin' up stairs in the elevator. I was so scared, I felt as if the end had come, and I was bein' jerked to my reward in an iron bird-cage with a small kid dressed in brass buttons. When I got into the hall it was about two feet wide and darker than Pharaoh's conscience. It had a string of cells along the side, and one opened into a chimney, and the rest into nothin' in particular. The middle cell was a dinin' room where we ate when we could find the way to our mouths. Near as I can recollect, you got into the parlor through the pantry, back of the servant's room, by jumpin' over five trunks. You ought to have seen my room. It looked just like a parlor when you first went in. There was somethin' lookin' like a cross between an upright piano and writin' desk. Sally gave it a twist, and it tumbled out into a folding bed. The first night, I laid awake with my eyes on the foot of that bed expectin' it to rise and stand me on my head; but it didn't. You took the book of poems off the center table, gave it a flop, and it was a washstand. Everything seemed to shut up into something else it hadn't ought to. It was a 'now you see it, and now you don't see it,' kind of a room; and I seemed to be foldin' and unfoldin' most of the time. Then the ceilin' was so low that you could hardly get the cover off the soap dish. I felt all the while as if I should smother. My! but I was glad to get home and get a breath of real air."

"Yes," Maxwell replied, "people live more natural and healthful lives in the country. The advantages of the city aren't an unmixed blessing."

"That's true enough. That's no way to live. Just think of havin' no yard but a window box and a fire escape! I'd smother!"

For a time Mrs. Burke relapsed into silence, while Maxwell smoked his briar pipe as he lay on the grass near by. She realized that the parson had cleverly side-tracked her original sub-

ject of conversation, and as she glanced down at him she shook her head with droll depreciation of his guile.

When she first accused him of the blues, it was true that Maxwell's look had expressed glum depression. Now, he was smiling, and, balked of her prey, Mrs. Burke knitted briskly, contemplating other means of drawing him from his covert. Her strategy had been too subtle: she would try a frontal attack.

"Ever think of gettin' married, Mr. Maxwell?" she inquired abruptly.

For an instant Maxwell colored; but he blew two or three rings of smoke in the air, and then replied carelessly, as he plucked at the grass by his side:

"Oh, yes; every fellow of my age has fancied himself in love some time or other, I suppose."

"Yes, it's like measles, or whoopin'-cough; every man has to have it sometime; but you haven't answered my question."

"Well, suppose I was in love; a man must be pretty conceited to imagine that he could make up to a girl for the sacrifice of bringing her to live in a place like Durford. That sounds horribly rude to Durford, but you wont misunderstand me."

"No; I know exactly how you feel; but the average girl is just dyin' to make a great sacrifice for some good-lookin' young fellow, all the same."

"Ah yes; the *average* girl; but—"

Maxwell's voice trailed off into silence, while he affected to gaze stonily into the blue depths of the sky overhead.

Hepsey had thought herself a pretty clever fisherman, in her day; evidently, she decided, this particular fish was not going to be easy to land.

"Don't you think a clergyman is better off married?" she asked, presently.

Donald knocked the ashes out of his pipe and put it in his pocket, clasped his hands across his knees, and smiled thoughtfully for a moment. There was a light in his eyes which was good to see, and a slight trembling of his lips before he ventured to speak. Then he sighed heavily.

"Yes, I do, on many accounts. But I

A White Woman

*THE struggle for more than
life in that cruel, God-for-
saken waste north of civilization*

By Berthe
Knatvold
Mellett

Author of
"The Man Who
Was Afraid," etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK B HOFFMAN

AN Eskimo skinboat whiffed in from the sea and debouched its grotesque passenger on the beach. A cloud parted in the sky as the creature turned towards a hut on the margin of the tundra, and a sudden gust of wind molded flapping calico and dappled furs to a strong young body that stood silhouetted in the light, tapering from bosom to waist and from hips to ankles.

The younger of two men sitting

against an overturned sledge on the beach stopped in the count of a string of white weasel pelts and looked up. He watched until the door of the hut shut against the rays of the strange night sun spinning along the border of the sea. Then he turned to his companion.

"Kaufman," he said, "that woman's white."

"Well?" questioned the other.

"Well, you can't use a white woman same as a native."

From behind the thicket of a tangled beard the older man peered out with an expression of sullen irritation.

"Well then, she aint white," he retorted.

The younger man went on counting the string of pelts. When he had finished he turned to his companion again.

"Where'd you get her?" he questioned.

"From Aeoluk—hundred sea biscuit and a coal-oil can of whisky. Why? You aint meaning you suspect—"

"I'm meaning Illuna's white—all white. Buying her from Aeoluk don't make her his blood. Boats have been lost hereabouts; missionaries have been murdered and God knows what. That woman's white."

Kaufman spat on the beach and turned seaward. Gradually, in the silence that followed, a look of sinister anticipation came into his eyes.

"Soft weather," he commented, "and the ice rotted and near all gone out. I look for the whaling boats 'most any time now—*Alma Marie* first, like she usually is, I reckon. Last year I had Mimeoot's girl Taia. Pretty good clean-up she made too, for a flat-faced native. If she hadn't coughed herself to death last winter, I'd 'a' kept her, even if she hadn't the looks of some. But this year with Illuna—"

The young man dropped the string of weasel skins and faced Kaufman.

"That woman's white, I tell you."

"So you said."

"Well, you can't send a white woman down to the whaling boats."

Again Kaufman spat, and again his eyes went out over the heaving sea, and the sinister light glittered through his beard.

"Maybe you'd like to buy her yourself, Parker," he began after a silence, and his voice had the ingratiating whine of a huckster. "You've been squeamish about taking up with any of the native women. But if Illuna's white like you say—come to think, Aeoluk said something about a Siberian exile that crossed—on the grace of God I guess—and died and left a kid. Now for a guaranteed white woman—their being mighty scarce in these parts—I should say one of them black fox pelts—"

Parker stood up.

"Those skins go to my grub-stakers," he said, and his quiet voice belied the anger surging in his face. "I didn't get gold as I expected, but I got something else, and it goes to the men who are out money on me. What's more, I'm not buying women, native or white. If it wasn't that I'd eaten your bacon and beans all winter, flabby as you are, I'd hammer your vile mouth down your throat. Even at that I can't help but remember it was Illuna and not you that dragged me in out of the snow and brought me around when I'd all but passed in my checks; and that it was Illuna and not you that grubbed through the snow for the frozen fish in the cache, and melted the ice, and mended the dog harness and made the boots and kept the oil stove burning—and the rest of it your lazy carcass refused to do. You couldn't drive a native like you've driven that white girl. I'm strong now, and hitting the trail. But before I go, I'm going to see Illuna safe down to the mission and shut of you."

KAUFMAN got to his knees and thence to his feet. He was a tall man, tall and gangling, and glazed from parka to skin-boots with the filth of an indoor winter.

"Ye-a," he drawled. "You'll get a mess of sympathy down there. Said mission having learnt Illuna English, and thrown a sense of duty into her, further saved her soul by marrying her to a white man that could read his Bible if he wanted to. And it aint strong for matrimonial failures, and handsome young prospectors turned trapper, getting lost in the snow and breaking up Christian homes—you can sink your corner stakes on them premises. Nor you aint going to be the hero down to the village, neither. For all they care, Illuna's a native. She's been raised like one—and it aint in the native standard to be touchy about their women. I've seen one Eskimo that was staying at home trade wives with another that was going on a hunting trip—partly for a change, maybe, but mostly because the strong woman would be more useful on the trail. A little matter of which wife belonged to which cut no ice. And



"I'm meaning Illune's white—all white. Buying her from Aeoluk don't make her his blood."

hollering to old Aeoluk aint going to help. Half the women down there at the village will go to the ships—it's regular summer trade, like picking salmon berries and catching fish. Aeoluk couldn't savvy what you had to squeal about."

As he spoke, Kaufman maneuvered him-



"And whatever happens, wherever you go, wait for me, because I'll find you—some place."

self to the far side of the sledge. Parker's fingers twitched as he watched him. Finally he spoke:

"I'm not discussing the natives—they're natives and they have their own heathen customs. But you're white. I've heard there were things like you living up here beyond the borders of the world—but I never looked to see one. Down in that country they call the North, you'd be kicked into the sea. No, they wouldn't pollute Bering with you—you'd be quarantined and left to fester in your own filth. But here beyond the North—God, what vermin crawl! If you hadn't got every dollar I

had away from me, or if there was food that I could steal without leaving some poor devil to starve that had snaked it out of the open sea, I'd see you in Hades before I'd touch your bacon and coffee.

"But I'm mushing to-day—now — *pok-mome!* I can't go without provisions and a boat, and I can't leave a white woman at your mercy in this Sodom. That pair of fox skins are worth money—more than you'll ever

lay hands on again unless you hustle, which isn't likely. Now listen well, for you're going to follow instructions. You took all I had on me when Illuna dragged me in, for the grub and nursing I had to have. Now I'm holding you to the promise you made then, to stake me to a *kyak* and an outfit when I left. Those fox skins belong to my grub stakers—but I'm going to hold

one out on them—for Illuna. It buys her from you, see? I'll say that over again so you'll remember. That fox skin buys Illuna. I'm not taking her along, because I'm not that kind. I'm leaving her here until

I can find a way to come back and get her—decent. I'm leaving her—but it's hands off for you, understand? No whaling vessel fo'c'stle for her; you get that, don't you? Well, there's my proposition, and you'll take it, or by heaven I'll come across and make you take it."

"Sure," drawled Kaufman. "It's what I wanted all along."

AS Parker came back into the hut, Illuna rose from the floor where she had been squatting at her work, and stood watching with troubled eyes while he gathered together the furs and blankets of his bed.

"What dō?" she questioned at last.

He turned towards her. "Listen, Illuna," he said. "I'm going to-day—"

"No—no go," she broke in. "Not yet big strong. No go—"

"Yes, I am going. I'm well, and the sooner I go and get back the better. There's something I have to 'tend to—seeing lawyers—and a woman I know with a heart big enough to mother the world. I want to ask her to mother you, Illuna. You found me half frozen, and you've been a good nurse and a good friend. I couldn't pay my debt to you if I grubbed the rest of my life. But I owe you more than that. You've got a tough lay-out here. It would be tough for a native—and you are not a native. I owe you the debt that every white man owes to every white woman—for you are my own kind—white!"

She stood stolidly gazing back into his eyes, and he thought she did not comprehend. Then her lips moved.

"White," she repeated vaguely.

"Yes, white, like me. See?" He rolled back the fur of his sleeves and held out his arm, clear and vein-tracked. She thrust her own beside it, and they stood silent, reading the testimony of the blood.

"White," she whispered again, and still he thought she did not comprehend. Suddenly with a little cry she dropped her head forward, and her mouth burned his wrists where the blue veins centered.

He jerked away, and she raised her head and looked at him with hurt eyes, void of shame.

He grasped her by the wrist and held her at arm's length.

"Cut it out, Illuna," he panted. "It's bad enough without that. Listen now, and try to understand. You're white, and a white man owes protection to a white woman. But I can't stay and look after you. Staying would only make things worse. I'm going. But I'm coming back to get you out of this. Until I get here you'll have to look out for yourself. I'm

giving Kaufman one of the fox skins; it's your price. It buys you from him. After this you belong to yourself, not Kaufman. You're a big, strong girl. Stand up for yourself. Fight for yourself, if you have to. And if worse comes to worst, clear out. Take the fox skin, if you can get it. It will buy decency for you and clothes and school—until I find you. Get to the reindeer station, where they don't know you and won't send you back to Kaufman, or a mining camp further on—any place. Only clear out. Illuna girl, if Kaufman don't stay bought. And whatever happens, wherever you go, wait for me, because I'll find you—some place."

II

ILLUNA stood in the doorway facing into the level rays of the sun that cut like a knife of gold straight from horizon to horizon. He had gone. She had seen the little *kyaḱ* put out to sea, had watched it hugging the shore, tossing like a bladder off into the distance and around the cape. She raised her hand to cover the ache where the wolf of pain tore at her heart.

Over the rim of mountains scooping the waters into a bay, a plume of smoke lifted itself against the sky and wavered landward. A native woman scuttled by with a pallid baby on her back, and another dragging at her heels. Wan gold hair and languid Latin eyes stamped the puny products of outrageous commerce. Illuna turned away. Dumbly she was responding to new vibrations. Back in the silent places of her brain the voices of her blood were speaking; the tongues of tradition articulated; the precepts of a thousand chaste women echoed.

White—the gift of Heaven she had comprehended only in fitful poignant yearnings. White—and removed from the sordidness about her. White—why, when they had taught her at the mission to read their books, had they not taught her to read her own face? The scuttling woman passed again, and pointed to the plume of smoke, and laughed, as though in answer to her question. A flame of rage flared in her heart that her blood

had been mistaken for the spawn of beasts.

She stood at the fragmentary window of the hut. Patched here and there with reluctant snows, the brown tundra stretched beneath the sun, easing the cramp of the long winter in the fleeting warmth. Indistinctly she sensed a kind of wonder in the rise and fall of the breathing ocean, the softening earth, the gleam of pale pebbles on the beach. Beauty called her with the voice she had never heard before, and she moved towards it in answer.

AT the door she met Kaufman, his eyes shifting eagerly, his hand clutching the black fox skin. Parker had paid and gone. But now that the treasure was in his hand, Kaufman's greed flung out feelers for lesser profits, for the gleanings of small silver and whisky to be scavenged from the whaling ships. He jerked his thumb toward the smoke, and an ugly smile cracked the tangle of his beard.

Illuna did not see his movement. She saw only the shining fur: her price, her freedom, her bond with one who had gone. Her eyes shone with its sumptuous shadow, and her fingers sunk in its caressing depths.

Kaufman flung her aside. "That makes no matter to you, savvy?" he snarled, and he flung the skin over a rafter. "What makes matter is that the *Alma Marie* is putting in. Savvy, *Alma Marie*? All right—vamoose! Down you go to the beach, ready to put aboard."

Another native woman passed the window and pointed to the banner of smoke. Illuna turned her back and stood tremblingly resolute, swallowing at the fear that swelled her throat.

"No," she stammered. "No—no—no—"

The shambling beast before her seemed to assemble his gangling members and to rear himself like a malevolent ape.

"No?" he howled. "Why for, no? Git!"

He flung his arm out in the direction of the door. The girl steadied her swaying body against the window ledge, and her eyes protruded with terror.

"No," she whispered, "no go, no go."

She pointed to the fox skin hanging like a fragment of night above her. "He pay; no go—stay and wait for him. White, see!" She wrenched back the sleeve of her parka and bared the white skin of her arm. "No go, no!" she repeated.

IN the corner leaned the long dog whip, the pitiless pursuer of the faithful and overdriven. Kaufman reached for it, and the lash fell with the snarl of a brand on the bared wrist of the girl. She shivered and lurched forward on her knees. The whip fell again and again, and the face of the ape man sagged open in a fanged grin. Blind with terror and beaten with pain, the girl backed farther and farther into the corner, until at last she could back no more and the rigid angle held her writhing and secure to the blows. She crumpled forward on her face and took her punishment as it fell. Sleeping malamutes waked in the village and herded down to ramp at the corner posts of the hut and howl brute encorces to the torture. Her long screams called natives to the window, where they stood with flattened noses on the pane, sniggering and jostling for a better view. Once she raised her face to them in appeal, but the raw-hide fell and the dirt floor drank the red ooze of a wound from eye to chin.

"'No go,' eh?" bellowed Kaufman. "'Stay and wait,' eh? When I'm done you'll stay and wait till some one comes to haul you out of that corner. 'White,' are you? All right. Five gallons of hootch I paid for you, and five gallons worth I'll get out of you or I'll take it out of your white hide."

"'No go,' eh? Well you do go—and go quick. And when you come back, you go again—and again as often as I tell you to. Understand? And when that ship's gone—you watch for the next—and the next. And when summer comes again, back you go. And you look pleasant too, or I'll fix your mouth so it'll grin in hell."

THROUGH the chaos of her torture the girl began to see a light. It was as if the spirit of her purpose

rose clear from its extremity, luminous above the suffering flesh. In its light a hundred agents of re-
prieve, friendly children of the superstitions of her childhood, laid their healing hands upon her. There came to her the monotonous call of the tom-tom, the wail and shout of the dancers, the incantations of the medicine man, the rattle of the devil bones, the grinning masks of the *shaman*, the rites for the dead—

"Fainted," panted Kaufman and turned the residue of his wrath upon the clustering natives at the window. They scampered away, beyond his howling fury, laughing good naturedly as they ran.

Weak with unusual exercise, Kaufman stumbled back across the threshold of the hut and sank upon the blankets on the floor. The minutes passed. The *Alma Marie* steamed into the bay and dropped anchor. Several *kyaks* put off from shore, loaded with skins and ivory for barter. The village waxed noisy and then silent. Still not a breath stirred the heap in the corner. A long plait of red-brown hair curled on the floor like a snake. Sunlight came in through the window and dusted it with gold. The red cord that bound it was like a leaping tongue. The blue bead where it ended glittered with the steady malice of an eye. Kaufman's head nodded towards it, nodded and nodded and dropped on his chest. With a sigh he lounged over on his back.

After a long time a little bruised hand

went cautiously up the wall and found a hand hold. Dragging herself to her feet Illuna stood and looked down on the hideous slumber of her tormentor. He sprawled on a pallet of skins and furs like a huge spider, his breath poisoning the air in nauseous waves. A

coffee can with a jagged tin top stood on the table. She won-



As she stood, her hatred flamed white and definite within her.

dered if she could find the way to his throat under his beard. She looked down at her slashed hands and cringed at the memory of her helplessness.

Then as she stood, her hatred flamed white and definite within her. Her beaten, broken body reared itself against pain and fear, and she stood erect. This thing—this carrion dog would stop the wonder of her new-found birthright in the dregs of his greed; he had scarred and gouged the white flesh of her body;

he had flouted the price that one had paid. She raised her clenched hands to the imperial shadow pendant from the rafters, and a hard sob like an imprecation shook her frame.

Kaufman stirred in his sleep. She dropped to her knees and reached a quick hand under the blankets of his bed for the revolver that should be there. He sat up, alert with the confused interest of the awakened. He reached for his bottle on the table and swallowed a long drink. Sickened with his breath, Illuna backed away.

AND then in the shadows of the hut on the tundra a ghastly farce began. From her distance the girl smiled, a livid smile like a bloodless wound gaping from cheek to cheek, and sidled toward the leering Caliban who squatted on the pallet.

"*Ai*—Illuna good now," she gibbered. "You mad Illuna? Oh, Illuna sorry. See, Illuna cry. Next time, Illuna do like you say, quick. Now too late for *Alma Marie*; many gone already. I tell you what Illuna do; Illuna tell you something; Illuna bring you much gold rings; much ivory to trade. How Illuna get? Oh *ai*, Illuna know. Long time ago medicine man dies, down to village. Much big bury; many tusks; much whale-bone; one, two, three gold rings. Illuna go to Island of the Dead. Natives afraid—devils live under graves—but because you mad, Illuna go get you gold rings—and ivory—quick—"

With a leap she was on her feet and flying to the beach. Kaufman, stupidly suspicious, rose to her bait and followed. He caught her as she launched the skin-boat, and slumped down in the prow, watching her as she paddled. Spurred by his avarice, fired by her talk of mammoth ivory, credulous of her chatter of whale-bone for trade to whalers and of gold rings for the winter's whisky, his suspicions changed to eagerness and haste. In spite of his knowledge of the native's superstitious dread of their lonely burial islands,—a dread which permitted visits only when death necessitated the attendance of a whole tribe or family and then under the devil-chasing patronage of a medicine man,—Kaufman

feared for a competitor in the race, and urged the girl to greater and greater speed. She smiled her ghastly smile and gibbered as she paddled, and the skin-boat swam around the cape.

Barbed with the crossed and inter-twisted burial pillars of generations, the Island of the Dead rounds up from the sea like the back of a derelict porcupine, shunned and microscopic to the mainland on the east, out of the course of boats, beyond fishing bounds.

They grounded under the shadow of a grave that was not so old but the stench of death diffused downward in noxious welcome. Kaufman stumbled ashore, his eyes roving convulsively for the curved fence of mastodon tusks that should mark the treasure of the *shaman's* grave.

"See—there—" Illuna pointed to a gleam of white in the gray riot of pilloried death. Impeded by the heavy sand Kaufman surged toward it—and the bleached ribs of a whale mocked him like the fingers of a sardonic fiend. With a bellowed oath he wheeled toward the beach, and saw the skin boat with a single passenger slip from the sand and fling itself to the crest of a wave.

III

IT was night when Illuna came to the hut on the tundra, and the rays of the sun lay flat across the ocean. She had purged her lips of their hideous smile; her oval face was set and expressionless, except for the welt that cut from eye to mouth like a red sneer. Now and then she pressed her hands, raw from the whip, to her cheek, and blew upon her palms, blistered from the paddle.

Moving scufflingly about lest curious natives might stop and question her haste, she collected such provisions as the hut afforded, and in cautious visits to the beach stored her boat. She found the revolver, and thrust it in the leg of her skin boot.

Then when everything was ready, she pulled the fox skin from the rafter, and stood straining it to her breast, biting into the sobs that quivered along her lips.

The sun had passed the meridian of night, and heavy silence bespoke a sleep-

ing village, when she shoved her boat from the beach again, and like a low-flying water-bird of the night it passed out of the bay and around the cape. The look-out on the *Alma Marie* called as she passed, and a livid blush blotted her cheek. Then the silence came down again, and the even *slip, slip* of the paddles ticked off the morning hours. She was following the barren shore line to the south instinctively, her gaze steadily ahead. And as the hours passed, her body forgot its pain, and released her thoughts.

She was white, and down there ahead of her, white women lived and worked and hugged their white children to their breasts. By and by, after a day—or two days perhaps—she would pass a cabin; and again a day—and another. And so it would go. After a time there would be a village, with windows and curtains like the mission, and white women smiling behind them. She would show them her white arms and her red-brown hair, and they would know her for a sister.

Stored in the prow, safe from spray, was the fox skin. He had said it would buy decency for such as she. It should buy that. It had been her price, and once it had not bought her. Well, it should buy much now. After a while—a long, long while, perhaps—when she had learned the books and the ways and the clothes of the white sisters that awaited her, he would come. He had said it—and he would come. What were years—if he found her at last? She would tell him of her torn flesh and the outrage to her blood. She would tell him of the vengeance she had taken: of Kaufman moaning out his breath on the Island of the Dead; of Kaufman clawing with long fingers for the water that was not there; of Kaufman crazed with the flapping rags and rolling skulls, crawling to the water's edge and howling to the heedless sea.

Gradually as she thought, Kaufman came to haunt her. Not the Kaufman of eager eyes and brutal hands: a Kaufman shaken with terror, plunging his talon fingers in the brine and gasping at the salty drops that fell from them upon his swollen tongue; Kaufman plucking away the thicket of his beard, and

laughing raucously at his frenzied play; but Kaufman, a white man.

And the pain of a bitter pity seized upon her, draining her arms of strength and her heart of purpose.

The sun had tracked its horizontal trail to noon, and half a day lay between her and the Island of the Dead. But there a man sprawled in the sand, clawing for the water that would not flow, howling to the dead that answered with the awful wisdom of the silent. A long sigh of weary resignation moaned through her lips. She was white; she could not go on. She turned her boat to the north.

HE waded out waist deep in the water when he saw her coming, his beard drenched with brine and tears. Holding her revolver in a steady grip she shifted her seat and pointed to the paddle. He understood and clambered in, snuffling horrid thanks. She pointed towards the shadowy mainland, and he laid the full strength of his flabby muscles against the paddles as he stood out towards it.

She did not speak. Now that he sat before her, distinct from her pity, her loathing clamored for its prey. She closed her eyes, and listened for the strokes of the paddle to cease. If he moved toward her, she would fire, and it would be over—

He beached the canoe near a freshet, and she watched him drink his fill, and wait and drink again. When he had done she called to him to unload and reload the skin boat. The division was share and share alike, and a meager outfit for each the scant store of provisions made; but he wept on his knees at her mercy.

When all was done she stepped back into the boat again. The gold eye of the sun peered through the mists of another morning. Behind her the genie of her old life shambled hurriedly to the North. Before her the South unrolled, wide as the world, limpid with day.

Some place friends awaited her. Some place she would buy decency. Some place she would work and wait—and he would find her. Some place!

Her blistered hands found their grip on the paddle, and the boat danced forward.



"Read it," she said. I opened it and found that it was a memorandum in (apparently) Millard's own hand to the effect that by an arrangement with the insurance people she would be carefully guarded on her entire trip.
—"*A Stake of a Million Dollars.*"

A Stake of a Million Dollars

A spirited poem, an elusive puzzle, a powerfully dramatic play—all these are included in this remarkable story. It tells of shrewd old Millard and of the plans he laid, and of his failure to count that most important factor: Love.

By John Fleming Wilson

Author of "The Woman He Wanted To Forget," "Junk," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN NEWTON HOWITT

ACHILLES was a Baptist, wasn't he?" said Samuel Garfinkle. "I understand his mother dipped him, all but his heel."

"I have forgotten my Greek," I answered. "Yet I fancy you are right in your statement."

"And there was a lady—"

"Quite right," said I.

"I remember reading all that in poetry when I went to boarding school," he went on. "Poetry! There's lots of facts in poetry. Achilles' heel was a weak point. Every man has one. It may be his heel or his liver. And then there's always the lady."

I have known Garfinkle for many years. He belongs to the plain-clothes force that looks after the merchant marine—a detective, trusted secret agent of the underwriters, solver of mysteries and arm of justice; he studied the puzzle of the *Stranger* and sent her skipper to the gallows. He is the finder of lost ships, the man whom Lloyds sent to find out what became of the *Python*, the German steamer that vanished with three millions of Chinese treasure. He is a bluff, sturdy fellow, with a calm and expressionless face. His memory is prodigious and his note-books might well be considered as the archives of the many seas. But that he should remember any poetry was amazing. In my meet-

ings with him in ports around the world I had never known him to use a metaphor. Achilles? I was curious.

He settled himself comfortably on the lounge of my cabin and lighted his pipe. "Yes," he continued, "it was that poetry that made me see into that poor devil's attempt to rob the International Line of a million."

"You mean the case of the *Aurelius*?" I asked. "I thought that packet had been reported missing."

"Naturally," he answered. "The Lutine bell rang all right. But I didn't give it up. It is my business never to give anything up. The underwriters had paid the insurance when they came to me."

He rocked back and forth, a way he had. "It was the only vessel the International ever lost, you know."

"And you saved the million?"

"Surely. But old Millard lost the girl."

"I didn't know there was a girl concerned," I responded.

"How the deuce should you?" he demanded. "I'm just telling you. Millard had her insured for a million dollars."

Garfinkle is provoking. He will waste no words in telling you that, say, your grandfather left you a hundred thousand; but when it comes to things that really matter he is an oyster. I opened him, so to speak, by a thrust.

"How much of the million did you get for your pains?"

"Nothing except my expenses—and a touch of rheumatism. I caught a con-founded cold.... Captain Muffle didn't believe in having dodgers on the bridge. We officers nearly died of exposure. Muffle was one of those men who might sleep in the snow and keep their feet warm. The *Aurelius* was a stiff packet, too. She dived." He fell silent, apparently recalling the idiosyncrasies of that steamer long lost.

"Who was 'her'?" I demanded. "And who was Old Millard and what about the girl?"

"He insured her for a cool million," he returned. "You see, he had sent for her and they were to be married."

"Lloyds will insure anything," I replied. "But I didn't know they would insure a bride's appearing at the altar."

"She didn't appear," Garfinkle rumbled. "And the ship didn't get in. That was the trouble."

Then he told me the story.

YOU say you don't know of Millard?

He was a rich fellow that owned half the timber in Oregon. He was formerly a logger. He made a great deal of money and went abroad. There he met Adelicia Summers. She was twenty-two and beautiful—poor, however. Millard was fifty and rich. They became engaged and he went back to Oregon to build a new house and make ready for the bride.

My first introduction to this case was when I was informed by the underwriters that Millard had paid a heavy premium to insure the safe arrival of Miss Summers in San Francisco. My chief called me back from Antwerp and put it briefly.

"Garfinkle," said he, "an American millionaire is going to marry a Miss Adelicia Summers, who sails on the *Aurelius* from Valdivia for San Francisco just five weeks from to-day. He has insured her arrival for a million and paid a heavy premium. Go to Valdivia and look after the risk."

So I took a Red Star packet for Colon and then a Pacific Steam Navigation liner to Callao. There I waited

for the *Aurelius* and joined her as third officer. You know my people can always arrange those things. A third mate has the evening watch from eight to midnight—the best time to see things.

Naturally, Captain Muffle didn't know who I was. He received me doubtfully.

"The people home send us out all sorts of officers," he growled. "The other man wasn't due for his holiday for six months. I wish I had the influence some of you men have."

I took it as part of my day's work. Skippers that have been kept on the West Coast too long get crusty.

MUFFLE was a strange man to be master of a steamer like the *Aurelius*. Small and dark, with no special dignity, he didn't impress one. He was precisely the kind of chap that oughtn't to attract attention in a big office. One wondered how he had ever got on. Good navigator, of course—but nothing extra competent—nobody behind him, either. Dozens of better men are hunting little places, I thought. And he had command of this big liner!

I have found that when I am surprised I must be careful. Muffle was profound—a very deep man. He set his mind on some thing and went after it. That was the way he got the *Aurelius*. I fancy the superintendent of the line was so worried over the fellow's persistence that he gave him the ship to be rid of him. His physical insignificance was merely a mask for an indomitable and passionate spirit. Now that I look back I realize that the man could have discovered America. Nothing daunted him. You will see how accurate my description is when I tell you the story.

My first business was to identify Adelicia Summers. Not a hard job, eh? to find among a hundred West Coast passengers a girl that a man thought worth insuring for a million? But the *Aurelius* was a huge affair. Her decks were like boulevards, and with all the jogs and crannies and cosy-corners it wasn't easy to find some one you didn't know. Then Muffle had a prowling way of hunting you up and saying, "Ah!" and "Eh?" as if he had caught you in some transgression. Anyway, it's against

the company's rules for officers to talk to passengers except in the line of duty. And I didn't want to go to the skipper and show him my credentials. He merely knew me as S. Garfinkle, his third officer. And, as I say, I wanted to be careful.

AT last I took the purser one evening and pumped him thoroughly. There was a Miss A. Summers in private cabin "A"—the big suite. With her was a companion.

"Nice, respectable old lady," said Morton, the purser. "A bit of a comic, but I like her."

"And the girl?" I demanded.

"A bit of all right," he answered. He was enthusiastic. He went into a detailed description of her. He had been specially impressed by the fact that she was a perfect blonde.

"Absolutely a pure type, old chap," he told me. "Figure, hair, blue eyes, everything. American, too. You ought to see her."

"Why haven't I?" I demanded. "In three days I haven't caught a glimpse of a single goddess."

Morton nodded and turned back to his desk. "The old man is looking after her," he murmured. "You don't know the old man. A deep fellow! But I never saw him attentive to a woman before, and I've been out here three years. Well, I suppose she's the daughter of some big millionaire and it's policy for him to play the cavalier. And not such a hard job, either!"

I caught a glimpse of her the next forenoon and I agreed that she was a very splendid figure. She was walking up and down under the awnings, chatting with an elderly lady whom I took to be her companion. I observed the skipper join them presently. Nearly all my watch they were together, the girl seemingly rather detached, the elderly companion chirping away with her precisely bonneted head a little on one side. Muffle did not have much to say; occasionally he smiled.

It got to be the regular thing after that. You know that coast—the long, smooth Pacific swell, the tremendous glare of the sun, an occasional blue

head-land or the glimmer of a snow-peak inland, and the steady, pulse-like throb of the screw. Practical as I am, I never sail down there but what I find myself yielding a bit to it. And at night I stare up at the Southern Cross. Years ago I lived in a place in San Francisco where there was a street lamp, outside, with four flames—like the cross. The lamplighter used to put up his little ladder and stick his torch up and—well, there was a lady lived there—a mere matter of sentiment.... The lamplighter never knew I watched for him through the curtain. It meant the end of a long day.

I will not refer to my notes, but I think it was the sixth evening that I came up on the bridge and found Miss Summers there. Muffle was standing just behind her, stiff and square.

He turned to me abruptly and said, "We sha'n't make Paita."

Now I knew that the *Aurelius* had no orders for Paita. Why did he say that? Possibly he thought I was fresh from home and wouldn't know. Yet it stuck in my mind. There was something in his tone that caught my ear, a kind of dull, ugly note. I have heard it several times. Achilles probably spoke that way when they took his girl away from him.

I thought it over while they talked in low tones, and I decided that Muffle was merely a bit peevish. I moved clean down into a corner and presently they both went below. But to do so they crossed the bridge and I got a close look at Miss Summers. She merely glanced at me, but I saw in her expression a query that almost made me speak.

AT midnight I was going down to my room when she stopped me just by the alley-way that went into her suite. It gave me a start when she called me by name.

"Mr. Garfinkle, I'd like to speak with you a moment, please."

"Certainly, madam," I told her. She drew back into the alley-way and I followed her clear into the cabin. The elderly lady sat there with a book in her hand. She glanced up without surprise.

"Eh?" she murmured, smiling. "It's

Mr. Garfinkle himself—our kind guardian."

I was angry. Instantly I thought I saw that old Millard had informed her of his arrangements and had wormed out of the office the fact of my presence on the *Aurelius*. My first notion was, "Does Muffle know?" Then I took a hard look at the girl. She was dressed in some kind of shimmering stuff; she was unjeweled and there was nothing to take one's eyes off her extraordinary physical splendor.

"You are angry," she said musically. "But Mr. Millard informed me about your mission. He said you would help, if need be."

"You need help?" I demanded. "How? How are you sure that it is to me you are to come. Why not to the Captain?"

She reached her hand out to her companion, and that amazing person calmly pulled out of the leaves of the book she was reading, a folded paper. Miss Summers gave it to me. "Read it," she said.

I opened it and found that it was a memorandum in (apparently) Millard's own hand to the effect that by an arrangement with the insurance people she would be carefully guarded on her entire trip to San Francisco. In one corner I recognized the official sign.

"There is nothing for me to do at present but accept this as authoritative," I assented.

"Captain Muffle doesn't know," she went on. She seemed to expect a reply to this statement.

"Do you want him to know?" I inquired. "It may be my duty to tell him."

She slowly drew her slender white hands upward till they rested on her bosom. She appeared to be profoundly stirred. I observed that the elderly lady was looking at us both, her head slightly on one side.

I think my mind never worked more swiftly. Millard had met this girl in Europe and had preceded her to San Francisco. Her safe arrival was insured for a million dollars. But how was it that she had embarked at a port like Valdivia? A mere mining port?

"When did you leave Paris?" I asked, as carelessly as I could.

"Why don't you help me?" she whispered. "You are paid to do it."

"How?" I inquired. "You must remember that I don't represent your future husband, Mr. Millard, but the underwriters."

"To see that he doesn't get the money—if I don't arrive?"

The woman with the book smiled at me. "Important people arrive," she chirped. "The rest of us merely 'come.'"

Miss Summers turned on her like a tiger-cat, her eyes blazing. "Mother!" she said sibilantly. "Will you cease? This is serious!"

"A million is always serious," was the placid answer.

QUEER conversation, wasn't it? A man in my profession gets to count on little details. This companion was "Mother;" they had boarded the *Aurelius* at Valdivia; and this fine creature was demanding help. It was perfectly plain to me that I must walk carefully.

"You will excuse me till to-morrow?" I asked. "You see my position; I'm a subordinate and I really owe obedience to the Captain."

She shook her head. "You can explain." She fixed her shining eyes on mine. "It is him I would like to save."

"A poor creature," murmured the old lady. "He is paid for it."

"For my sake," said the daughter.

Do you see why I remembered Achilles? Muffle had a weakness; and there was a lady—a fair parallel. What was the silent and imperious master of the *Aurelius* about? I expressed none of these mental questions. I merely told that young woman she had better tell me her story.

"You see," she said, evidently much relieved, "there is another woman."

The elderly mother chided her gently. "You do mangle your tenses so, Adelia. You should say, 'There *was* another.'"

"Are you—I mean, begin at the beginning," I suggested.

"It began in Panama," she said in a constrained voice. "It was there I met Captain Muffle. My mother and I were on our way to San Francisco; we had to

wait a week for a steamer. At the hotel was Miss Summers, and we got acquainted. Captain Muffle was very kind—the consul introduced him.”

“Then you aren’t Adelicia Summers?” I asked.

“No,” she whispered. “She was very ill. She had a girl chum up-country from Valdivia and—she didn’t want to go on up to San Francisco. I’m sure she—she didn’t like Mr. Millard.”

“Then?”

“We all went down the Coast to Callao. She was lonely. She insisted, so Mother and I went down.”

She drew back in her chair and I saw a little moisture film her fine eyes. “Adelicia died,” she whispered. “She left all her papers with me and told me all about it. ‘Mr. Millard insured my arrival,’ she said. ‘He was very fond of me. I have been very mean to him, in not going to San Francisco.’

“That was her little story, Mr. Garfinkle. She merely ran away.... I think there was a young man she wrote to—quite poor, you know.”

“And the papers?” I demanded.

“They are in Captain Muffle’s safe. He knew all about it, having met us both. He knew that I wasn’t Miss Summers. But no one else does. It seemed very safe for me to travel under her name.” She looked at me appealingly.

“Why?”

The elderly lady glanced up from her book. She smiled faintly, and her bright eyes glittered maliciously. “Mr. Garfinkle does not take millions seriously,” she murmured.

OUTSIDE, the ship’s bell tolled one o’clock. It seemed to me as if I had been in that airy, luxurious cabin for hours. And I was far more perplexed than when this girl had first broached the matter. I fancy I stared at her queerly, for she suddenly flushed. I saw deep in her eyes an expression that led me to say little more, except, “And what is your right name?”

“Millicent Barnes,” she murmured.

“I’ll see you to-morrow morning, Miss Barnes,” I told her. Then I took my cap and left. In my own cabin I went over all my instructions and my copy

of the insurance policy that Millard had paid for. A couple of clauses in it stuck in my mind. I hadn’t considered them before.

Miss Adelicia Summers was to arrive in San Francisco safely before the 20th of June, it being provided that she should take the fastest steamers, stop nowhere nor interrupt her journey for any reason whatever. The usual “Act of God” provisions were marked out. It was a plain and simple bet on the part of the insurance writers that Miss Summers would appear at the Palace Hotel on the 20th of June. If she did not, Millard was to receive the sum of one million dollars in gold.

You see the point? She *had* interrupted her journey. Had she died in Panama, or perished in a wreck, the insurer would receive his money. But she had deliberately gone to Valdivia. Now the question was: what possible object could this woman have for her plotting? What did Muffle have to do with it? The million, even in case Miss Summers’ violation of the agreement had forever remained undiscovered, would have gone to Millard.

Usually I’m not precipitate. On this occasion I saw that immediate action was necessary. Within a very few days the *Aurelius* would complete her voyage to the Isthmus. By the time we were there I must have every clue run down. I went back to the bridge.

Muffle was there, a silent and motionless figure. When I came up he turned sharply and said, “What are you doing up here your watch below?”

“I wished to speak to you a moment,” I returned. “I have something to show you, sir.”

“In the chart-room,” he directed.

“I’d prefer it in your own cabin, sir.”

“Oh, all right. Queer hour, Mr. Garfinkle. Anything wrong below?”

In his room he quietly seated himself at his desk and looked at me. Without a word I handed him over my credentials, visé by the head of his own company. He studied them with calmness. “I understand,” he said presently. “Now what can I do for you?”

“I’m investigating the death of Miss Adelicia Summers,” I told him.



At that moment we saw a flash from the gunboat's bow, and a solid shot ricocheted



over the smooth swells past our bows. "That's number one," Muffle grunted.

I confess I expected the fellow to wilt at this. Instead, he nodded composedly. "I met her in Panama, on her way up the coast to be married. She was taken ill and went down to Valdivia to visit some—er—relatives. Fever, it was."

"But her mother and herself are passengers on this steamer—according to the manifest," I insisted.

"She had no mother," he returned, glancing at me with a little malicious grin. Captain Muffle was really a fine actor.

"I should like to see the papers in your safe," I went on.

"I'm master of this ship," he said with a sudden assumption of anger. "I don't propose to listen to any more from one of my officers."

"Well," I said curtly, "Miss Millicent Barnes can tell me all I need to know. Of course, you understand that you will be hanged. It's useless for you to protest. My office is fully acquainted with all the details."

His smile put me on my guard, though his bronzed face flushed at the girl's name. I saw my opening:

"Then I am too late?" I inquired. "I wonder what will become of her."

His face was inscrutable. But every man has a weak point. I thought I had found it. I hadn't dealt with West Coast skippers for nothing. I nodded and left. A moment later I was in Cabin A and addressing Miss Barnes. She was still up, and her wide eyes told me she knew what I had done.

"Come quickly," I said, "before it is too late."

Without a word she followed me out upon the shadowed deck and to the Captain's room. I flung the door open and we stepped in.

MUFFLE leaped to his feet, his face blazing. "Millie!" he said.

She faced him tranquilly. "Yes, I gave you away. I told Mr. Garfinkle. It was the only thing to do."

"The only thing to do," he repeated. Then he smiled bitterly. "I might have known. One gets within reach of what he's worked for all his life, and then—some woman spoils it all!"

She answered that bitter look with one

that made him gasp. I knew that that stubborn safe was going to be opened. It was.

With the papers in my hand I glanced at Muffle. "Have you seen these?" I asked.

He nodded curtly. I unfolded the various documents. I have always made it a rule in the examination of important papers to look at the official ones first. In this little bundle—done up with an ex-hair-ribbon—I found four bills-of-lading for machine guns and arms, and six more for ammunition.

That informed me that the *Aurelius* was carrying contraband. There were three thousand tons, all told, of that infernal stuff.

The next paper was a copy of the insurance policy. It was the last one that exposed the whole matter, so far as Miss Adelicia Summers and old man Millard were concerned. I sha'n't go into many details—better to be explicit.

Millard was back of a revolution in Central America where he owned tremendous concessions. A new government had wiped out pretty much of his property by the simple procedure of a proclamation of confiscation. Millard wanted to overthrow this recalcitrant outfit and get his own men back. So he had gone to Europe and bought a million dollars' worth of arms, had the stuff packed as mining machinery, taken by the Trans-Andean railway and thence packed aboard the *Aurelius*. That's simple, isn't it?

But arms and ammunition are kittle stuff to carry. Millard was, he thought, no fool. One couldn't send those bills-of-lading through a bank without getting into trouble. One couldn't load a perfectly respectable liner with contraband without risking more than trouble. Let Millicent Barnes explain.

"You see, the poor girl wanted to get back to the States," she said simply. "She had been studying art, and one meal a day is too little for a girl of twenty. Starvation isn't a profitable study. It is hard to dispose of the products."

"You know that, Ted!" (Fancy that small, austere skipper being called by such a name!) "So when Millard met

her he saw that he had just the person he needed. He made love to her—in a kind of bearish fashion—and because Paris was a little purgatory, she chose hell—and promised to marry him.”

“Did she tell you all this?” I demanded.

“She whispered,” was the response. “And then he swore to meet her in San Francisco and insured her arrival for a million. She didn’t know about the rest.... There was a young fellow somewhere in California.... She got sick in Panama—and we all went to Valdivia. There Captain Muffle loaded all the stuff we’ve got aboard. She died. She gave me the papers and I read them. You understand? When she reached San Francisco Millard would have taken the drafts and the bills-of-lading and told her he had changed his mind.”

Plain as ink on a napkin, wasn’t it? He couldn’t insure the arms, so he insured the girl. But I turned to her. “And for why,” I demanded, “did you assume her name and take the risk? You can’t collect that million insurance.”

She defied me with a smile. “Mr. Muffle will tell you the rest.”

THE Captain looked at me steadily. “Just as soon as we get rid of our passengers at Guayaquil, this packet surrenders at sea to a cruiser that’s waiting for us.”

“Belonging to one of Millard’s party?” I inquired. The old scoundrel! I saw it all then. The arms were to be stolen by his own ship. The girl would be delayed and he’d collect the insurance.

“The vessel is insured,” he murmured. “Nobody will lose a cent. She was built for an auxiliary, anyway.”

“It happens I’m working for the underwriters,” I remarked. “They will lose.”

He seemed to consider this thoughtfully; I noticed that he didn’t look at the girl at all. Finally he said simply, “It is arranged.”

“But you didn’t count me in,” I suggested. “This is plain piracy.”

Muffle seemed deep in meditation. One heard only the breathing of the girl and the steady throb of the faithful engines. I confess that I was again patching up

my theory of what apparently was a crime. There was Millard, using a poor painting girl as a messenger under promise of marriage; this unknown Millicent Barnes; her queer mother; Muffle, with all the burden of a successful career upon him—and what?

Miss Barnes spoke first. “Ted,” she said in her rather light, clear voice, “you mustn’t.”

He looked up quickly. “It is for you,” he answered gently. “You like money. You were born to use it—” He paused for an adverb and selected “—*beautifully*.”

She stepped towards him. “I didn’t know you loved me so much! You are an honorable man!”

He sighed. “I was,” he murmured. “But I understood you cared for money.”

Her fair face flushed and her eyes darkened. “What have you heard?” she demanded.

“It was your mother,” he confessed.

“My mother?” she laughed. “I hired her in Panama.”

Muffle rose quietly. “I see. Now I’d like to hear about you. Who are you, anyway?”

She faced him timidly. “I—I am Millicent Millard,” she said bravely.

“Barnes,” I interrupted.

She refused the correction. “It was in Paris. Father didn’t tell me. He’s—” She broke off and turned on me. “I—he’s only my step-father. My mother is dead. Father is—only—a bank!”

“A bank!” echoed Muffle, evidently completely dazed.

“Just money!” she said, with tears in his eyes. “Mother died, of course.”

In the silence that followed, Captain Muffle quietly closed the safe. As the combination clicked, the speaking tube from the bridge whistled. We heard the words, “Puna Light, sir!”

“Guayaquil,” he muttered. “We are too late!”

There wasn’t much to say, was there? The girl said it all: “I sha’n’t go ashore at Guayaquil.”

“You must,” said Muffle firmly. “I have to carry this thing through. It’s arranged.”

“Then I’ll stop with you,” she an-

swered. "I—I don't care for money, Ted."

Her tone was for him only; I left—left her standing there in all her magnificence and beauty, with him—a small, dark, rather insignificant man who had sold his line for a woman's sake.

I met the chief officer on his way for the morning watch. "We'll land our passengers this morning," he said with a yawn. "No freight—just luggage. Smell the river!"

I did sniff the morning air and sure enough detected the unmistakable jungle odor, that scent of swift decay that marks the mouths of Central American streams. But my mind really busied itself on one thing: what was to become of that girl in there, pleading with a man to save his own honor?

THAT next evening I was to know.

The *Aurelius* had discharged all her passengers and half of her crew—much amazed they were to have the purser sign them clear. I came on the bridge and, by a little figuring, calculated that we were standing off the coast quite a bit. Muffle was in the chart room. When he saw me he beckoned.

"At eleven to-night there will be a small cruiser waiting for us," he said quietly. "She expects us. We shall not stop. Stop for nothing. We are bound for San Francisco via Balboa."

I was sorry for the man. He was going to do a hard thing. It would be quite impossible for him to explain to the owners. His career was blasted. And he would get no money—all for the sake of a woman who was a perfect blonde.

Before I could formulate any words to tell him that there was a better plan, the girl came up. She merely nodded to me and went over and stood by the skipper's side. Only the police lights were lit, and the great decks looked bare. The engines were tuning up till the whole steamer shook.

Came ten o'clock and I saw a faint glimmer ahead, evidently a signal hoisted on a vessel's mast. Muffle strolled over to me, very composedly.

"That is our signal," he remarked. "You see the scheme was to capture us—a slight show of resistance, you know—

and then all our arms and ammunition would be theirs. Millard owns that cruiser. It was his idea that Miss Summers be trans-shipped. The bills-of-lading, you know. And if she didn't arrive, he would have his million dollars, anyway. A shrewd business man, Mr. Garfinkle!"

"And we aren't going to stop?" I inquired again.

"No," he said calmly. "You see—well, I sha'n't collect the money I was to get."

"I don't know how I can save you," I murmured. "You understand I must report to my people."

"Certainly," he answered. "Of course. But we sha'n't stop for them." He had made up his mind.

As though called by some secret signal, the girl came across and stood with us, gloriously resplendent. She merely nodded to me and then turned her serene face towards the faint lights flickering ahead.

"That is your father's ship," Muffle said with sudden bitterness.

"He will never see me again," she responded tensely. "A mere money-maker. He gave my mother a hundred thousand dollars' worth of jewels and couldn't leave his office long enough to see her die. . . . He might have held her hand."

So it goes: a man depends on the stricken hearts of women, and they break. His victim and his daughter—who can tell what midnight whispers passed between them? Not you nor I. Yet the world is ruled by a smile, a tear or a murmur in the dusk. That old, hardened, shrewd Millard didn't know it. He trusted to two women's absolute subjection to his will and to the ambition of an insignificant, ambitious, hard-working skipper.

IT was just a quarter to eleven that night when we came within a half a mile of that strange cruiser, with her odd signals blazing and her boats swung out from the davits. I could feel the girl's breath on my face. Muffle stood quietly over the trap hatch.

"Is she under way, d'ye think, Mr. Garfinkle?" he asked.

"Seems to be stopped, sir," I said.

At the moment we saw a flash from her bows and a solid shot ricocheted over the smooth swells past our bows.

"That's number one," Muffle grunted.

I could see by the starlight that the gunboat was pretty well supplied with three-sixes. I put my hand on the telegraph lever. "Shall I stop her?" I demanded.

"Keep her full speed," he returned firmly. Then he turned to the girl. "This is not safe for you. Better go down into the cabin. They'll likely use their small arms."

"No," she returned quietly. "You are doing this for me." Something strained crept into her tones, the queer little note that a woman uses when her heart is set on a man. "If you stop, you'll make your million, Ted."

He swept all subterfuge aside. "I'm going ahead and win you," he growled.

I think the cruiser felt, in some fashion, that the *Aurelius* had no intention of halting and following out instructions. The next shot was a shell that screamed through the forward shrouds.

"We have a pretty explosive cargo, sir," I reminded him.

He did not even look at me. "Our entire crew belong to that revolutionary navy," he remarked. "Let 'em hit us."

I could see that the little cruiser was swinging slowly. She was after us. Muffle merely took the engine-room speaking tube and called down for more speed.

The *Aurelius* could step some. But that other vessel's guns beat us. A shell sang out of the darkness, exploded in a dense cloud right over us and hailed down in fragments.

"You've done all you can," I urged. "We can't distinguish her flag. International law will save you."

By this time the sound of the firing had brought half the crew on deck. Muffle handed the girl a revolver. He swung on me. "Keep her going, d'ye understand?"

I changed the course slightly and was surprised to find the elderly companion of Miss Barnes beside me. "Why don't you stop?" she demanded.

I didn't have to answer that question.

A machine gun had opened on us and the bridge was spitting fire where the bullets hit. Then a six-inch shell entered the bowels of the *Aurelius* and the engines stopped with a clang of riven metal.

"That ends this packet," Muffle said soberly. "Mr. Garfinkle, get a boat over and take Miss Barnes."

"Not without you," she sobbed, putting her arms about his neck.

"I stay with the ship," he said gently. I leaped for the boat, kicked the chocks out and slipped the falls. I can't tell you what those people were talking about. But I saw a little sprinkle of fire aft and I grabbed them both. A moment later we were afloat a hundred yards from the *Aurelius*. And before I could pull a hundred yards farther, up she went in a great spot of bright flame.

"That's the torpedoes," muttered Muffle. "Well, there goes a million!"

The rags and shreds of the vessel hissed into the water about us. I pulled desperately. The light died down and the sea calmed. Our tumultuous world became dark and still. Far in the distance were the lights of the departing gunboat. I could imagine the consternation of her officers at what they had done. *They* would never tell. So I made sail in for the far-away coast. Muffle was seated on a thwart with Miss Barnes (or Millard?) in his arms. I heard him say, "Well, that ends it," and her soft response, "No, this begins it!"

NATURALLY, I made my report—quite according to facts. And old man Millard gnawed his nails in his fine office and couldn't say a word. I understood later that Muffle and Mrs. Muffle had gone to Alaska. I know that he has done well. He was a very profound chap, one that would get along. He has one weak point, like all of us. If he had carried that thing through, without regard to the woman in the case, he would have been, let us say, Dictator. Now he has a fair position as superintendent of the Skagway & Dyea Commercial Line—and Millicent. I saw them last year. She is still a perfect blonde. The kid's name is Aurelius.

"That," he snapped, "is what I done to your lover."



For Love of Sheila

IT'S a love story and a prize ring story, and a story with a "punch" different from any you've ever read.

By Octavus Roy Cohen

ILLUSTRATED BY D. R. FITZPATRICK

SHEILA LANIGAN believed that Mike Doneley was the greatest man in the world, and she told him so. Others voiced similar opinions in his presence, and it was only natural that he should eventually come to believe it himself.

True, the sporting editors of the metropolitan dailies made no such claims. Mike Doneley was a corking good featherweight, they admitted, but there were others in the one-hundred-and-twenty-pound class who were capable of giving him a mighty stiff argument inside the padded ropes. Mike thought the sporting editors were biased, and that Sheila and his select coterie of friends were not, which only goes to prove that Mike did not hate himself.

As a matter of fact, Sheila was the future Mrs. Doneley—a pretty, slender, black-eyed, raven-haired slip of a girl who fairly reveled in the physical perfection of her fighting future husband;

and Mike's friends were those who helped him spend his battle-won money. Mike's manager, being critical but super-enthusiastic, said little and thought much.

Mike wasn't such a bad sort at that. Circumstances had prevented him from forming a stable character. In the first place, he had started banging around training camps from his fifteenth year, and, being a lovable sort of a chap, the various fighters he knew showed him the finer points of the game, and finally one of them got him a four-round bout at one of the Standard A. C.'s weekly shows.

Mike won by a knock-out in jig-time, and he kept on winning. When his eleventh fight had been fought, and his eleventh knock-out scored, Big Sam Darrell, manager of former world's champions, offered him a "stable" place. Mike, being slightly over seventeen,—a wiry little bundle of springs,—accepted with alacrity. Then came a siege of rigorous

training which lasted six months. Mike was beaten by better men in the confines of the training quarters; he ran miles upon miles every day; he shadow-boxed, learned to batter both bags, light and heavy—in short, he underwent a course of training which was calculated to sap any stamina storage under normal, or to increase that which was more than normal. He became a fighter!

He made his second *début* at the Standard, where the faithful regulars greeted him with howls of glee. He went on against a tough preliminary boy in a four-round bout, and knocked him out in the second. Then came six months of semi-finals, a long series of one-sided victories; and finally he was graduated into the class of main bout fighters.

His success there was less startling, for he fought better men, veterans. Darrell handled him carefully, and he fought comparatively little during the next year and a half. Just before his twentieth birthday he appeared meteorically on the horizon as a contender for featherweight honors.

Once again he felt the flush of continuous victories; once more he was showered with adulation. Then came his great fight with George McNab, a former featherweight champion of the world. He finished McNab in the seventh round, and instantly became a drawing card. It was generally conceded that only three men—Stanley Parker, Knock-out Davis and Tommy Birney—stood between him and the featherweight premiership—and that he was Parker's master.

Then Darrell succeeded in hooking up Knock-out Davis for a ten-round battle, and the sporting world took notice in earnest. Should Mike Doneley whip Davis decisively, Tommy Birney, the champion, would be forced to accede to his demands for a fight. . . .

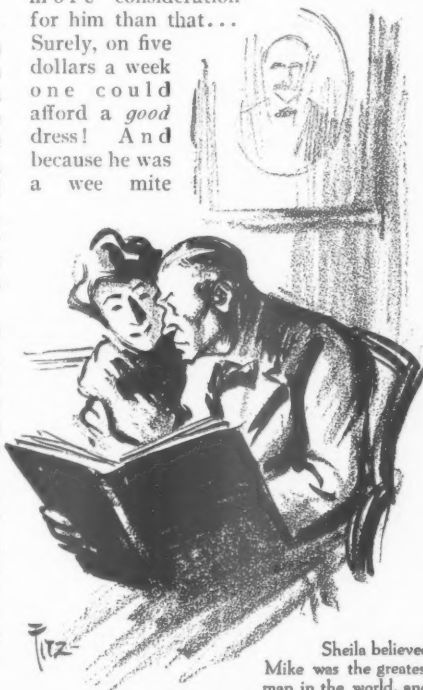
For three years Mike Doneley and Sheila Lanigan had been keeping steady company. She clerked at five dollars a week; he received from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars for each of his ten-round fights in New York. The prospect of marriage to the fighter, from a purely financial standpoint, looked bright to the girl.

She was just the ordinary type—uneducated, naturally bright, observant, level-headed, a potential housewife and mother par excellence—and insanely, wildly, passionately, jealously in love with Mike. In fact, she loved him too much: to her he was a paragon of virtue and nobility—the world contained no other man worthy the name. And Mike loved her with the satisfying, deep-rooted love of a man for an innocent girl to whom he appears as savior, protector, guardian.

It was after the McNab fight that the Mike Doneley Social Club was formed, and Mike himself elected honorary president. They gave a "racket" for him at Tammany Hall, and called on him for a speech. The girls crowded about him after it was over, and told him what a wonderful man he was—told him things about himself which Mike had never dreamed before.

In all the glory of the occasion, Mike became a bit piqued at the drab gown which Sheila wore: she might have had more consideration for him than that. . . .

Surely, on five dollars a week one could afford a *good* dress! And because he was a wee mite



Sheila believed Mike was the greatest man in the world, and she told him so.

ashamed of her, he ignored her during most of the evening and smiled his way in the midst of a crowd of fawning, flattering friends.

Flattery has turned the heads of better men than Mike Doneley, prize-fighter. And a great deal less than the ovation he received has bred jealousy in the hearts of more level-headed girls than little Sheila Lanigan. It wasn't a bit surprising that after the racket they became a bit cool and resentful toward each other.

It was during this period of frigidity that Billy Draper, a curly-headed, handsome hundred - and - eighteen - pounder with the physique of a miniature Hercules walked into the training quarters of Mike Doneley and applied for a job as sparring partner.

He boxed four fast rounds and took a merciless beating without a whimper; in fact, he was going stronger at the final bell than he had been at the beginning. Arrangements were made almost instantly, and Billy Draper became one of Mike Doneley's staff.

From the jump the two young men exhibited a natural antipathy toward each other, and because of that they showed above form when sparring with each other. Then, quite without malice, Sam Darrell introduced Billy to Sheila, and the young man promptly fell heels over head in love with her. It didn't make him feel more kindly towards his employer when he was given to understand by the other fighters in the stable that Sheila was mortgaged property; so he merely set his teeth and trained on and on.

Five times Billy fought good men before various clubs, and on each of the five starts he romped home a winner on points. On the sixth try he knocked his opponent out. Darrel liked him, saw in him the type of fighter who is destined to be always good, always normal, always a fighter.

Then came the great battle between Knock-out Davis and Mike Doneley. Doneley won by a knock-out in the third round, and for the first time the most pessimistic of the sport writers admitted that Mike looked even better than Tommy Birney, the champion. For the

first time they wielded the pen of approval and attempted, through the vaunted power of the press, to force a match for the world's championship. They supplied whatever little had been needed to turn Mike Doneley's all too shallow head completely.

He became more cool toward Sheila. Several of the prettier girls he knew informed him by thinly-veiled innuendo that he was wasting his precious self on an uncultured girl such as Miss Lanigan.

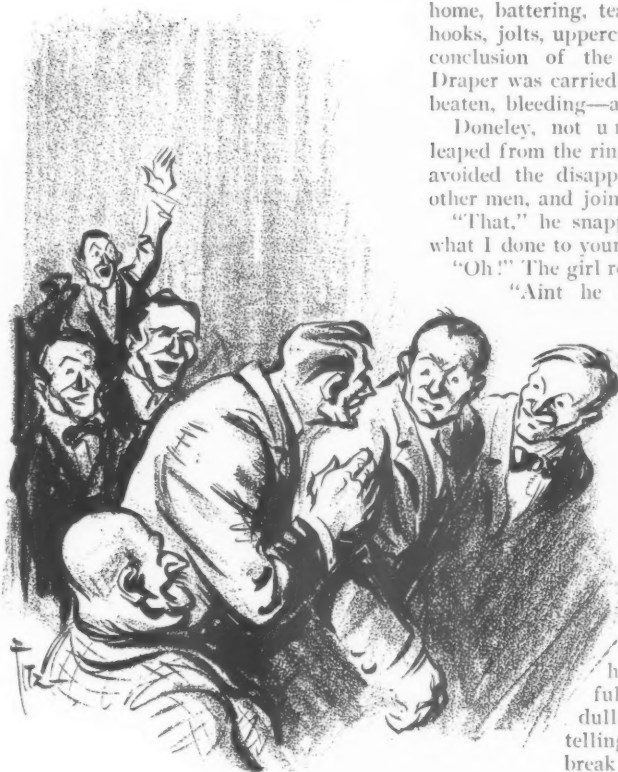
He accepted invitations to dinner parties and went—without Sheila. The other girls were far more brilliant than she, and they didn't slave from Monday morning at seven o'clock until Saturday night at nine for five dollars a week. They dressed extravagantly, and it was not for him to ask as to the sources of the money which supplied their plumage. Mike had reached that unenviable state of mind where brilliancy of garb attracted; and Sheila was drab. It was far better for Mike Doneley, future world's champion, to be seen on Broadway, or in the cafés, with a stylishly gowned girl, than with a demure, quiet little thing—who would have loved him none the less had he been an obscure drayman.

In short, Mike regarded himself as too good for Sheila, and watched for an opportunity to break with her.

With all of Man's delightful inconsistency, he noticed the growing intimacy between Sheila and Billy Draper, his sparring partner, with green eyes. What right had this lowly scrapper, who fought his heart out at twenty-five dollars the bout, to gaze covetously at the personal property of the great Mike Doneley? And what right had Sheila to encourage him? He was too handsome, too undamaged!

Mike planned a revenge in line with the innate smallness of his nature. He invited Sheila to his training quarters, and she, thinking it a first advance on his part, accepted promptly.

She was surprised and not a little awed at the grandeur of the apparatus, and not a little shocked at the nearly nude condition of the men. Glad indeed was she that she had had the foresight to come with her brother, a cigarette-smoking, young would-be sport who luxu-



He smiled his way in the midst of a crowd of fawning, flattering friends.

riated in the extra money he borrowed from time to time from his sister.

Then Billy Draper, a bath-robe covering his pink skin, entered the big room and strode rapidly to shake hands with the girl. It was not difficult to interpret the look he bestowed upon her, and it was an undoubted fact that her face flushed. Mike Doneley, dull red with anger, broke in between them roughly.

"Get the gloves, Draper!" he ordered curtly. "We're going four rounds."

"I just boxed six with McCarthy," returned Billy quietly.

"You heard what I said," snarled Doneley. "Get the gloves and box with me—or clear out!"

From the sound of the gong it was a fight. Doneley was all over his man like a veritable demon, slamming his blows

home, battering, tearing, ripping—jabs, hooks, jolts, uppercuts poured in. At the conclusion of the third round, Billy Draper was carried from the ring, inert, beaten, bleeding—almost unconscious.

Doneley, not unmarked himself, leaped from the ring, tore off the gloves, avoided the disapproving stares of the other men, and joined the girl.

"That," he snapped significantly. "is what I done to your lover!"

"Oh!" The girl recoiled. "He's not—"

"Aint he been hangin' round you pretty reg'lar?"

"Yes, but—"

"But nothin'!"

If you don't know how to keep respectable when you're engaged, why, you'n me's done—see?"

Sheila Lani-gan had pride—too much,

perhaps. She drew her lithe form to its full height—only the dull flash of her eyes telling of the rage and break in her heart.

"Mike Doneley," she said, "I hate you! Here's your ring!"

She tore from the third finger of her left hand the little diamond he had given her, and dropped it at his feet. Then she turned, head high and cheeks scarlet, and swept out of the door. Her brother trailed her, nodding his shallow head wonderingly.

BILLY found a ready welcome in the fighting "stable" of Sam Levy, the wizened little manager who had for years managed a former world's champion. But it was not until he had been in rigid training under Levy's direction for nearly a month, and the sting of his humiliation had somewhat worn off, that he found the nerve to call on Sheila. They went for a stroll....

Details of love-making are ever the same in essential parts. Billy proposed,

It wasn't so much of a proposal, as proposals go; it wasn't at all flowery, or spiced with poesy and metaphor.

"I aint such a much," he told her crudely, but with a strange quaver to his tones, "but you sure are the wifest looking kid I ever lamped—an'an—I love you like hell!"

"Oh!"

"Yeh! Honest! I aint there with the gab, but I'm sure gone on you, little kid. You mean heaps to me—just lots and lots. If you'd only marry me—" His voice grew very solemn and wistful.

For a long time she was silent; the big heart of her was heavy. It wasn't easy to lose a friend.

"I like you, Billy," she choked, "—bunches! But—I—don't love you, and I—I—can't marry you!"

It was dark, and if his lips closed in a straight, white line, and if his forehead contracted as though in pain, she couldn't see.

"—And I hope," she went on pleadingly, "that we can still be good pals."

"We sure-nuff can, kiddo," he returned gamely. "We sure can. And why don't you love me?"

"Well—you see—I—that is—"

"Mike Doneley, eh?"

Something in his tone chilled her, and she tried to reassure him.

"Oh! don't think it's because I saw him whip you. 'Taint that at all. I hated him for that. He's been actin' mean—"

"He's no good, Sheila. I don't see what you love in him. That's the way with you wimmin—throwin' y'rselves away on guys that don't want you, while some poor boob eats his bloomin' heart out around the corner—ready to swap twenty years of his life for one of the kisses that the husband don't even notice...."

She rose in quick defense of the man she loved.

"You don't understand. The Mike you know aint the real Mike. Mike is an awful good chap—you'd like him—on the level, you would. It's all been since they started makin' so much over him—and they turned his head. He means well, honest. I tell you, and I *know*! Him an me's split—"

"You have?"

"When they carried you outa the room that day, he said something to me about—you—us."

The fists of the fighter balled into hard, vicious lumps.

"I give him back his ring, and walked out. He's wrote to me a few times, but I always refused to see him."

"Then why—"

"You don't know much about girls, Billy. When a girl loves a man she don't get over it so easy. I'm sorry for Mike, an' angry. But I love him."

"An' he thinks he's too good f'r you. He holds his head higher than the sweetest little woman God ever made. Never mind, dear. I know how you feel about the man you saw git licked—an' I'm goin' to lick Mike Doneley one of these days. Then I'm comin' back to you wit' something you'll *want* to listen to!"

It sounded like an empty boast; but as the girl watched the broad shoulders swinging easily above the beautifully lithe figure as he walked down the street, she wondered.

IT was almost ten months after Doneley won the featherweight championship of the world, when the public had become impatient for the new champion to fight in defense of his title, that Billy Draper sought Levy.

"Sam," he said quietly, "Doneley has been pullin' a stall long enough. He's been raking down the easy coin, and refusing to fight. He's got to fight some one soon—an' I want to be the one."

Levy laughed. "That's rich!" he vouchsafed merrily. "Why, you wouldn't stand a one-two-twenty chanct wit' Doneley."

"S'pose."—Billy rested his elbows on the table and stared intently at the manager.—"s'pose a man aint quite as good as another man, an' s'pose he's just *got* to lick him?"

"You mean—"

"—That I *got* to lick Mike Doneley! I've sworn I was goin' to do it—an' I *must*! There aint no *maybe* about it. He's a better scrapper than I am, an' I know a heap o' men who can lick me an' who Doneley c'n lick, but that aint the point. The point is that I *got* to lick Doneley! Get me?"

"You admit he's a better man?"

"Yes."

"An' you don't claim he's yellow?"

"No."

"Then how in the name of all that's hellish do you expect to put the hooks to him?"

"I'll tell yuh," said the fighter earnestly: "That man has two weak spots. He's never gone over a long route—he's started twenty-round bouts many's the time, but always against dubs, an' he's finished them before the tenth. An' he couldn't lick me inside o' ten rounds. Beyond that limit, he's unknown. He might be able to last, an' then again, he mightn't, which gives me the call. I've been over that distance three times, an' I was always goin' better in the last five rounds than I was in the first five."

"I aint fool enough to think that maybe Mike aint able to go the distance. He prob'ly can. But he's never done it before, an' he wont be wise to the job of nursin' his strength."

"Now f'r the next point: He whipped me easy enough in a trainin' bout long ago, an' he's just the kind of dam' fool who thinks he's got my number just because he done that when I was green. So he'd be more willin' to fight me than he would any other good featherweight. He knows I'm good enough to draw a big gate."

Levy leaned forward interestedly.

"You wanna go twenty rounds wit' him?"

"That's it."

"An' you think you wont ruin y'rself? Y'r willin' to lay a bet on y'rself against a better man?"

"Didn't I tell you," snapped Billy, "that I *got* to lick him?"

Levy sized his man up quietly.

"I'll go you," he said suddenly. "An' here's hopin'!"

IT took Sam Levy just three weeks and four days to arrange a battle with Mike Doneley. From the jump he saw that Draper had sized the situation to a nicety; he saw that the champion felt no apprehension over the battle, and that he regarded it in the light of a rich monetary pick-up.

As for the sport writers, they ridiculed

the idea. Billy Draper was a good man, they agreed, but he wasn't on the plane with Doneley. They accused the champion of picking a soft one.

The fight had been landed by the Vernon club, and a few days before leaving for the coast, Billy called on Sheila.

It was a depressed little Sheila who greeted him, and they talked commonplace. No, she said, Mike had not been to see her, and had written but once. His conduct had been shameful.

Billy held her hand a trifle longer than convention demanded when he rose to leave.

"Aint yuh goin' to wish me luck?" he asked huskily.

Her face brightened.

"I sure am, Billy. I—I—hope—you win."

THERE is something about a battle for the world's championship that lures fight fans. In the thousands who jammed the arena when Billy and Mike faced each other in the ring, there were not more than a couple of hundred who believed that Draper stood a chance of winning, yet the excitement was intense. But on paper, as the sporting phrase has it, Draper stood as much chance with the champion as a selling plater in the Futurity.

The men faced each other grimly. The seconds had cleared the ring. The gong punctured the silence. Spectators in-breathed audibly and craned their necks. The fighters stepped forward, touched gloves across the referee's hands; he stepped back, and the fight was on.

Billy was cool as ice—smiling, almost debonair. In his ears thrummed Sheila's "I hope you win!" He understood.

Doneley leered as he tensed his beautiful muscles.

"Gawd help you!" he muttered awesomely.

Their dancing, quivering lefts touched for a second. Then Doneley stepped in swiftly, and his right flashed to the jaw. Quietly, coolly, Billy stepped inside the blow and clinched. Surprised that no in-fighting had been attempted, Doneley hung on until the referee pried them apart. It was very tame.

They sparred for an opening. Draper landed a stiff left to the face, took a hard right and left to the jaw in return, and slammed a hard one to the stomach as Doneley stepped in close. Again they clinched. The audience had settled back to critical watchfulness.

Both missed hard rights for the jaw; and then, quick as flashes of light, Mike's left shot out twice and spanked both times on the face of the challenger. Like a panther, Billy leaped in and his right swished harmlessly short. Doneley laughed and breathed more easily. It was patent that he had nothing to fear from superior cleverness.

The round ended as it had begun—without action. The spectators conversed easily. They knew the round had been a feeler.

"Wait'll Mike gets goin'," advised one. "Just wait—"

The second round passed without the striking of half a dozen blows, and the third had very little more action. Honors were about even. It was in the fourth that the real fighting began.

Hardly had Billy set himself when Mike rushed; it was the first rush of the fight, and was similar to the one which had finished Billy on the day when Sheila had been a spectator.

Instinctively Billy stiffened. His right flashed out, and he uppercut with his left, but neither blow landed squarely and Mike bored in. Close, he "uncorked," and his fists flailed to the midriff. Billy backed away in distress and covered. Doneley uppercut and broke to the jaw, rocking Draper.

"Stan' up an' fight!" he mouthed unpleasantly. "Stan' up an' fight!"

Billy uncovered to fight back, and in that second three lightning smashes reached his stomach, hurling him with terrible force against the ropes. The crowd had risen to its feet as a man and was howling. A hard right to the face brought a stream of blood spouting from a nasty cut over Billy's eye. The crimson stream half-blinded him.

He was forced into a corner, where he covered ignobly. Twice he attempted to fight back, but with each game effort he was overwhelmed with an avalanche of blows which drove him back—back—

until only the sagging ropes held him in the ring. At the end of the round he was gory and gróggy.

"Knock-out imminent!" was the verdict sent out over the ticker, and men disgustedly prepared to leave.

"A sell!" they agreed. "Th' idee of gettin' good money f'r an imitation scrap like this!"

Mike, flushed with seemingly certain victory, shot from his corner and met Billy two-thirds of the way across the ring.

"W'y don't yuh try an' fight?" he taunted, as Billy stepped inside of a terrific right hook and clinched desperately. "This is worser'n that other day!"

Billy stiffened. He slammed his left across to the jaw, but Mike ducked and countered to the wind. They broke, and as they came within range, Mike chopped four lefts and rights to the face and body and took a harmless hook to the neck in return. Disgust was writ plainly on the faces of the ringside sport writers.

For the entire three minutes Billy was on the receiving end, always covering. Cries of "Stall!" and "Fake!" echoed through the arena, and the referee was begged to "Stop the slaughter!" Mike became careless as he thundered about the canvas-covered floor after the elusive Draper, slamming, hitting, banging. . . .

At the end of the round Levy bent anxiously over his man. "He aint got your goat, is he?" he implored.

"No! S'more o' that lemon, quick!"

"Then w'y don't you fight? Y'r passin' up openings a blind man c'd see!"

"I tol' you I was goin' to fight this fight my own way, didn't I? I aint hurt—much; an' he's wearin' himself out. He's beginnin' to take chances, too. Wait till the tenth round!"

And wait until the tenth round Levy did, excitedly, nervously. Awakened to the subtlety of Billy's game, he noticed that the champion's blows were not hurting the challenger, and that most of them were taken on protecting gloves, and that Billy smiled covertly at the efforts of the title-holder to finish the bout. Only five times in the nine rounds had Billy tried to mix things—but each time he had been worsted. He waited, hung on—covered—and watched!

Draper's task was appallingly hard. By study, training and iron determination he had ventured to take unto himself the job of whipping a recognizedly better man. And for nine rounds he had bent every energy toward making the champion careless.

At the beginning of the tenth round the men met in the center of the ring and sparred. Doneley stepped back, muscles tensed. Then he rushed! Instantly Billy jabbed and crossed his right to the wind, but the blow was too high and merely landed on the chest of the champion. Halted only momentarily by the impact, the champion bored in close and closer, hooking viciously.

He landed a right and left hook to the jaw, and chopped his right to the stomach. Billy covered in sudden distress, his face distorted by the agony of the last blow. He clinched. Furiously Doneley tried to shake him off but he hung on with tenacious desperation. Billy's knees were quivering; he was nauseated—his one real attempt to fight back had met with disastrous failure. For the first time during the fight there entered his head a doubt of his ability to fulfill the task he had undertaken. He wondered whether he had not overestimated himself or underestimated his opponent.

Mike landed a crushing right to the

jaw, and men in the audience rose to their feet and howled for the finishing blow. Doneley was all over his man, cursing gutturally, fighting like a fiend incarnate. Billy backed away, then tried to clinch. His eyes were glazing, his defence poor. A light chop to the cheek sent him sprawling on the canvas. Men started for the exits.

The referee towered above the prostrate fighter, and his right arm moved inexorably up and down. Billy nestled closer to the floor; it was comfortable, the most comfortable thing he'd ever felt. How easy to lie there until ten seconds should have been counted, and thus avoid more of that ripping, tearing, agonizing punishment.

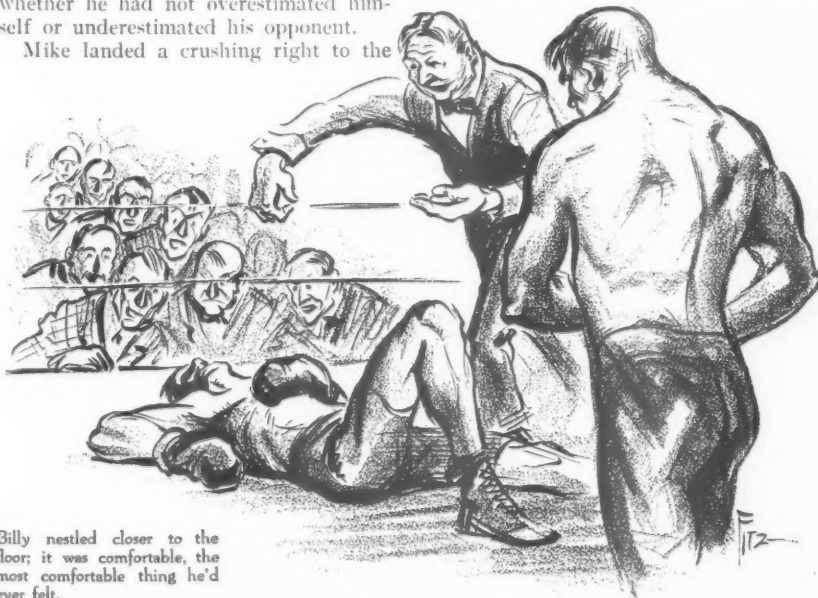
"Six—seven—eight—"

Subconsciously Billy heard the roar of the crowd, but through it all came the quivering, strident, harsh voice of Sam Levy.

"Git up!" he howled. "*Git up!*"

"*Nine—*"

By an almost superhuman effort Billy staggered to his feet and into a clinch. Doneley fought with him, shook him as a terrier shakes a rat, and flung him away—only to find himself in another cling-



Billy nestled closer to the floor; it was comfortable, the most comfortable thing he'd ever felt.

ing clinch. The gong! The round was over!

Through the eleventh round Billy clinched, and clinched—and clinched. His head was clearing gradually and some of the dreadful nausea he had experienced during the awful tenth round had passed. Once again, thought of possible victory obsessed him, and he noticed with keen delight that the champion was taking chances—leaving himself open.

The eleventh passed and the twelfth. The thirteenth was easy sailing for the challenger; he weathered the wild fusillade without trying to fight back, and the spectators voiced their disgust in no uncertain terms. This was not a championship fight, they screamed; it was a fake. The referee was implored time and time again to stop the uneven match, but something intangible in the attitude of that apparently beaten Draper held his hand.

In the fourteenth it happened. Billy took a hard one on the chest—but it was on the chest and did not hurt. Feigning injury, he sank to the mat. At the count of eight he staggered to his feet and recoiled from a terrific blow to the side of the head. Morbidly curious men stood up to watch. For thirteen rounds they had waited patiently, bearing with the make-believe fighting, for the pleasure of witnessing the details of the knock-out blow.

Billy's ruse was an old one. It was a "stall" originated by Lanky Bob Fitzsimmons and perpetuated by Leach Cross. He assumed a distress which he did not feel. Tentatively Doneley jabbed and then shot a right and a left to the jaw. He was visibly tired from the furious efforts of the past thirteen rounds, and as yet too wary to take a wide-open chance.

Both of his blows landed, harmless little taps that they were. Then, deliberately, he balanced himself on the balls of his feet for the knock-out blow. His right drew dangerously back. The audience was breathless... Then—

Out of his cover shot Draper—animated, alive, eager, terrible! Men gasped!

"God!" breathed one in awe. "He's been stallin'!"

Things happened with bewildering

rapidity. Billy's right crashed to the unprotected jaw of the champion, every ounce of the challenger's bone and muscle behind the blow. It landed flush. Doneley's knees sagged weakly; he spun across the ring. Like a veritable demon Billy was after him, slamming, ripping home the punches.

A left to the wind, then another terrific right to the jaw, and the champion crashed to the floor. At the count of seven he staggered gamely to his feet, and again he was beaten down by the whirlwind of pile-driving blows. He managed to last until the welcome gong. But they almost had to carry him to his corner.

Pandemonium had broken loose. The crowd was witnessing a miracle. Draper leaned back against the ropes and smiled grimly.

"Sponge me!" he gasped. "Rub me—like hell! I'll finish him this round!"

Levy was almost hysterical with joy.

"You got 'im," he breathed in wonder. "Dam' it, man, you *got* 'im!"

"I know it," returned the fighter, "I *had* to get him!" Across his mind flashed a picture of Sheila....

The bell. Billy, metamorphosed, shot from his corner. The champion set himself gamely for the bombardment of fists. He hunched his shoulders protectingly about his jaws....

Billy, balanced lightly on the balls of his feet, feinted wickedly with his left. The champion, still dazed, involuntarily opened his guard. Instantly Draper's right streaked in an uppercut and the champion rocked back on his heels. Sam Darrell turned away, sick at heart. The fickle crowd, a few minutes previously so bitter against the challenger, howled for the finishing blow. A championship was changing hands. It was one of the cataclysmic reversals which keep a fight crowd keyed to the highest pitch through the longest fight.

Billy bored in close; the champion covered—they clinched.

"You—you—can't whip me!" sobbed Doneley. "You—*can't*."

Billy was silent. He tore away from the clinch, shooting a hard right to the jaw as he did so. It was for such a chance as this that he had insisted on

fighting straight Marquis of Queensberry rules, where hitting is allowed in the clinches.

Doneley was champion. The conquering spark within him came to the surface. With wonderful gameness and ridiculous lack of strength he rushed.

Billy waited like a man of ice. Doneley came close. Draper's muscles squirmed like live things under the pink flesh, with the sheer tension.

Billy's right crushed to the jaw! His left crossed to the solar plexus! Like a thunderbolt, his right landed on the jaw again!

Doneley stood as though petrified. His hands fell limply to his sides. The referee leaped between the fighters. Doneley stared unseeingly at his opponent, at the sea of humanity massed about the ring.

Then he crumpled, and dropped like a log!

The counting of the fatal ten was a mere formality. Doneley was unconscious for fully four minutes. Twenty minutes later he was carried bodily from the ring

to his dressing-room, sobbing and heart-broken.

An hour later there came a knock at Doneley's door. Sam Darrell, haggard and worn, opened it. Billy Draper, new featherweight champion of the world, stood there.

"Well?"

"I'd like to speak to Mike a minute—alone!" he said significantly.

Darrell eyed him closely.

"Very well," he answered briefly. The others wonderingly obeyed his mandate, and the two fighters were left alone. Billy closed the door slowly. Then he took his stand at the foot of the couch on which lay the figure of the beaten fighter.

"I—s'pose—you've come—to crow—over me?"

Their gazes clashed.

"No, I've come to tell you something."

"Oh! Well, shoot! Then beat it!"

"Mike," said Draper slowly, "you've done me dirt. You always done me dirt. I *had* to lick you to-day. You've always thought you was the greatest thing in the world—" Billy choked slightly. "Back there in New York, Mike, is Sheila. You handed her one—good and plenty. You was too stuck on y'rself. You couldn't even notice her.

"I had to lick you to-day, Mike, to show you you wasn't the only thing in the world. Your friends'll give you the go-by now. But Sheila—she—she loves you! Man—go back an' ask her to fergit an' fergive. She's a woman—

"*That's* why I had to whip you, Mike—so—so—you c'd see that she's too good f'r you, 'stead o' you bein' too good for her.

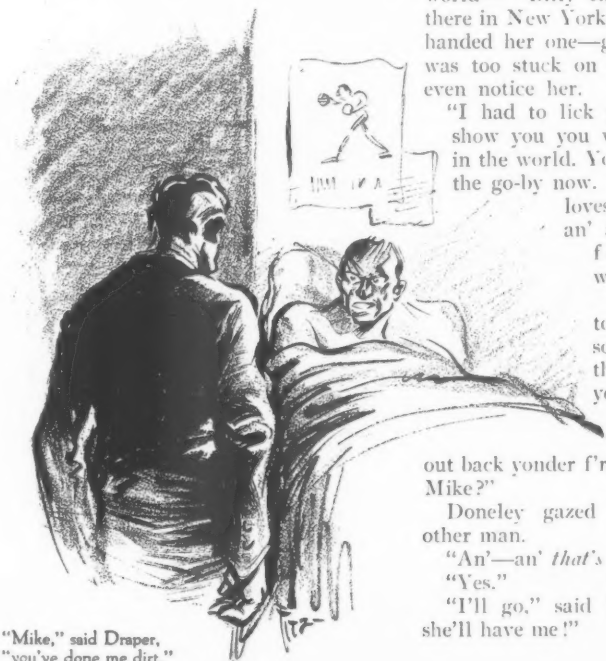
She's eatin' her heart out back yonder f'r you. . . . Willya go, Mike?"

Doneley gazed wonderingly at the other man.

"An'—an' *that's* why you done it?"

"Yes."

"I'll go," said Doneley humbly, "if she'll have me!"



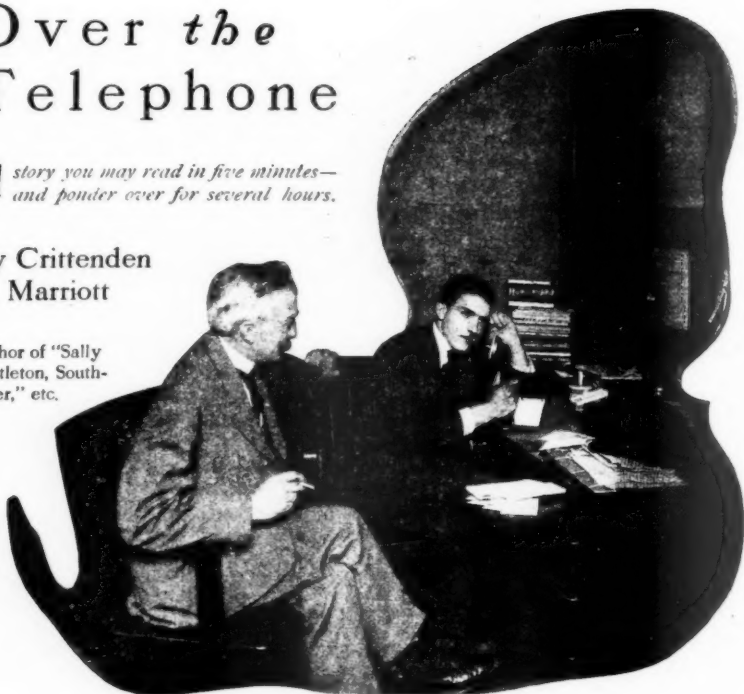
"Mike," said Draper, "you've done me dirt."

Over the Telephone

*A story you may read in five minutes—
and ponder over for several hours.*

By Crittenden
Marriott

Author of "Sally
Castleton, South-
erner," etc.



PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS ARRANGED BY G. TYSON

THE telephone jangled the second time, and Philip Mason, with a muttered apology to the white-haired gentleman with whom he was talking, turned and lifted the receiver to his ear.

"Yes," he said. "This is Mr. Mason's office."

.....
"Yes, this is Mr. Mason himself."

.....
"Mr. Philip Mason. Yes. Who is this, please?"

.....
"I should say it *was* personal!"

.....
"Very well! Let's hear your excuse!"

.....
"Who are you, anyhow?"

.....
"Really this is— Look here! I want to know—"

.....
"But—but—hold on a minute. Please

tell me who you are. I really must know."

.....
"Yes, but—Hello! Hello! Confound it."

Hastily Philip pressed down the telephone arm. "Hello! Central!" he called. "Hello! Hang it all. Say, Central, who was that talking to me just now?"

.....
"No, I know you can't usually tell, but just this time I hoped—"

.....
"Oh! All right!"

Philip hung up the receiver and turned to his companion. "Well!" he exclaimed. "If that isn't the limit!"

The elder man smiled. "It certainly seemed to stir you up considerably," he agreed. "But I couldn't make much out of your end of the talk."

"I should think not! Not in a hundred guesses! Say, Uncle John, did you ever have a girl—" Philip stopped, and

a flush ran over his face. "I don't know, after all," he hesitated, "whether I ought to tell even you."

Mr. Dade smiled back at him. "If there's any doubt about it, Philip, you'd better not," he advised.

But Philip threw back his shoulders. "No!" he decided. "There's no doubt. An anonymous speaker over a telephone hasn't any right to expect her words to be held confidential. I wouldn't repeat them to just anybody, of course, but you're different. Besides, you're going away, and I want you to advise me before you go, for I've got to find her."

"Oh! So you've got to find her. Well, who is she?"

"That's just it. I don't know. You heard what I said over the 'phone? Very well. Now, I'll tell you the rest of it. She began by asking in the sweetest, softest, trembliest voice I ever heard in my life, whether I was engaged to be married. I exclaimed at that, of course, and she said I would understand when I heard her excuse for asking."

"What was her excuse?"

"What do you suppose? She said—by Jove, Uncle John, it makes me feel like a fool to repeat it—but she said that she was in love with me herself. Now what do you think of that?"

Mr. Dade laughed. "It's your fatal beauty, Philip," he suggested.

"Oh stuff! Don't josh. This is serious. Nobody ever proposed to me before, and I don't like it a little bit. It isn't any joke to me, and it wasn't any joke to that little girl, either. She was scared half to death; I could hear the fear in her voice, poor little thing. Now, look here, what in thunder are you chuckling at?"

Mr. Dade wiped his eyes. "I didn't think she'd have the nerve to do it," he declared.

Philip sprang to his feet. "She!" he cried. "Do you mean that you know who she is?"

"I have every reason to believe that I do," responded the elder man, seriously. "No, she didn't tell me she was going to, but I think I know where she got



"Poor little girl," he said. "It wouldn't be quite fair for me to tell you her name, would it?"

the idea and—well, barring coincidences, Philip, I think there's no doubt that I know who she is."

"Well, who is she?"

But Mr. Dade shook his head. "What did she tell you over the 'phone?" he asked.

"She didn't tell me anything. She refused to tell me anything. She just said that she wanted me to know that I was—was—oh! confound it!—that I was so dear to her that she just had to tell me so, though she well knew that I would never love her in return. And she meant it, Uncle John. She was almost sobbing at the last. I could hear her."

"But she wouldn't tell who she was?"

"No. She said that she wanted a place in my thoughts if not in my real life, and that the method she had taken would get it for her—as long as I didn't know who she was. That she met me from time to time and would never have said what she had if there had been the least chance of my finding out who she was."

Mr. Dade tapped his foot with his cane reflectively. "Poor little girl," he said. "It wouldn't be quite fair for me to tell you her name, would it?"

"No," Philip thought awhile. "No. I guess it wouldn't. Yet I've simply got to find her!"

"What for?"

"What for? Great Scott! If a girl—"

"Curiosity?"

The young man stopped, flushed, and finally nodded. "You're right, Uncle," he admitted. "You always are. I'm a miserable cad. I've got no right ever to look for her except for one reason, and of course it's foolish to pretend to anything of the sort when I've never laid eyes on her and haven't the remotest idea who she is. And yet—and yet—she had a mighty sweet voice and I know—I *know* she's everything she should be and—Look here, Uncle John, tell me this much: is there any reason why I should not fall in love with her if I find her?"

"Not the least in the world, my boy. She *is* all she should be, and you'd be a lucky fellow to get her. I'd be glad to give you a hint if I thought it would do any good. But it wouldn't! She'd guess that you knew and she would be mortified to death and would think that you

came after her out of pity and—no woman wants to be married for pity."

"You're right, of course," the younger man agreed. "But I've got to find her. I'm more than half in love with her already. She had the sweetest voice."

A twinkle came into Mr. Dade's eyes. "Don't try to find her," he observed; "let her find you. She'll do it. Women know more about that sort of thing than we men have ever guessed. Go around among your friends and make yourself agreeable in your usual way. Don't be always trying to guess which girl she is. Put yourself in a receptive mood. She'll find a way to call you to her if you'll let her. Do this and—"

The speaker paused and looked at his watch. "It's time I was off," he declared cheerfully. "My steamer sails in an hour. Good-by, Philip, my boy. Write to me first at Rio Janeiro, and then at Buenos Ayres. I'll be back in a year, and if you haven't found her by that time I'll tell you who she is. I promise."

TWELVE months later, Mr. Dade found Philip waiting for him at the steamer.

"You are none too good a correspondent, Philip," he observed. "And my mails have been horribly irregular. I haven't heard a word from home for six months. What's the news? Have you found the girl who telephoned you?"

Philip blushed. "I—er—I was married a month ago," he stammered.

"Married! Heavens! To her?"

Philip squirmed. "I don't know," he burst out. "I've never dared to ask. Sometimes I think I am, and sometimes I think I'm not. Most times I don't know what to think."

The older man's eyes danced. "She keeps you guessing, does she? Good girl! What was her name?"

"Katherine Swan. She's a daughter of your old friend, Colonel Swan."

"A mighty nice girl," cried the older man, heartily. "I congratulate you, my boy. Now I suppose you mean to hold me to my promise to tell you whether she's the one," he finished soberly.

But Philip shook his head. "No," he declared. "No. I'm satisfied! I don't want to know now. I can't take the risk."

"Me?" put in Burke.
"I'm the Late Lamented.
Just now I'm the Dove
of Peace, too, if you'll
let me twitter at you
both for a while."



The Faults of Her First Husband

By Albert Payson Terhune

A new story by the man who writes with almost uncanny insight into the lives of the folks we all know.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. HENRY

LOIS Cruger sat on the edge of a very big chair in the center of a very big sitting-room on the second floor of a very big hotel. Lois was small,—scarce taller than a girl of fourteen,—and the huge, gloomily-garish surroundings intensified her smallness.

Those same surroundings also made intense the feeling of sick loneliness against which she was so vainly battling. She caught herself wondering vaguely if the man who wrote "There's No Place Like Home" had been referring to hotels.

In old days, Lois had rather liked big hotels. They gave an amusing and restful change from housekeeping. But always, then, Burke had been with her to attend to the million bothersome

details of rooms and meals and luggage and tips; and to suggest good times. Burke was a genius at suggesting good times.

It was different, now that Lois was traveling alone. In Reno, she had not so much minded hotel life, for her brother had been along. And, besides, there was not only the air of novelty and oddity of the Nevada divorce-built town to interest her, but she had been buoyed up, to the last, by a throbbing of righteous rage that acted as an anæsthetic.

But now it was all over. What was to have been done had been done. She was free. And back in Chicago—back in Chicago for the past forty-eight endless hours. And—and alone. And she wanted to cry.

Then she forced herself to look for-

ward instead of back, and at what she visualized in the prospect, she achieved a really creditable smile.

The smile was still making her tired little face very pretty and winsome, if a shade wistful, when a knock at the sitting-room door changed her slump of despondency to a pose in keeping with the smile. Thereby Lois became a very fair model for "At the Trysting-Place," or "Ah, Here He Comes," or any similar chromo inspiration.

And in came Burke Cruger, closing the door behind him. On sight of him, Lois slid down from the high-seated chair with a jar, the chromo pose wholly routed. And with scintillant originality, she gasped:

"Where did *you* come from?"

"From the hotel desk," he answered sulkily, like a school-boy caught out of bounds. "I saw your name on the register. Vane just told me he got a glimpse of you at the station, Tuesday. So I made the rounds of the hotels. As your name still happens to be the same as mine, and as I said I was your husband, the clerk downstairs let me come up without announcing me. I'm sorry if I'm butting in, but—"

"You—you told him you were my—husband?"

"If I'd said 'husband-emeritus' he wouldn't have understood."

"But why—?"

"Because I wanted to see you. Because I *had* to see you."

"I thought we agreed that we'd never again—"

"You did the agreeing, not I. I never agreed to anything."

"I seem to remember that was a trait of yours."

"I never agreed to letting you go. I never agreed that I was any of the things you called me in your complaint—an 'habitual drinker,' 'notoriously unfaithful,' or any of the other measly terms that filled the paper you filed on me."

"Isn't it a little late in the day to bring up all that?"

"Late? It's the first chance I've had. Your precious family took care I shouldn't see you alone during all that horrible time at the start. Then they told me you'd gone to Europe. And kind

friends of theirs rigged up a line of false clues that kept me chasing over the Continent for six solid months. And all that time you were at Reno. Yes, it *is* 'a little late in the day,' but it's my first chance."

LOIS tried to meet his angrily miserable eyes, and to be glad that his rounded jaw had gone lean and his florid skin sallow. But somehow, as he talked, in jerky, boyishly-wrathful fashion, she found it easier to study the pattern in the sitting-room rug than to look directly at this man she had so valiantly striven to hate. As Burke finished speaking, she rallied her forces.

"Please go away," she ordered, in a tone that she intended to make contemptuous and ringing, and that came out with a curiously muffled effect. "Please go away. I never intended to see you again. I never want to see you again. It is all over. And I want to forget it. Please go."

"I won't go," he answered stubbornly. "And I want you to come back to me. I want you to let us start all over again. *Do*, girl! Give me a chance to make good. I can do it, if your nose-y brother and the rest will let us alone. We were awfully happy together, you and I, till the others interfered."

"The others? There were more than one, then?"

"More than one? Lord! Half your friends and all your relatives!"

"I was speaking of the people who 'interfered' with our happiness. I didn't know there was anyone besides Mrs. Ransome. But of course, I'll take your word that there were more. Indeed, I've often supposed there must have been."

"That's not fair!" he blazed. "Mrs. Ransome's nothing to me, and she never was. I drank more than I needed at that cursed Country Club dance. And I kissed her—once. And (just the way the luck's always treated me!) you saw it. That was all. I told you so, a hundred times."

"All? Wasn't it almost enough? Or was it merely a sample?"

"Don't talk that way, girl. Deep down in the thing you call a heart, you know I'm telling you the truth. I always have.

You'd have known it all along if you'd kept the others out of this. I'm not any saint. I never pretended to be. I haven't been a model husband—"

"No?" she interrupted with ironic amazement.

"But I haven't been a cur, either. When we got in with that Country Club crowd, you and I, I began drinking. And—well, I flirted. So did you, for that matter. Everyone did. But I never was really drunk—until that night. And that one kiss was as near as ever I came to being 'notoriously unfaithful.' That's gospel truth. I've learned since then that a man's a dunce to try to be a 'good fellow' by lapping up lots of booze that he doesn't want. And I've learned that the 'fool who rocks the boat' is a Solon compared to the husband who risks his happiness and his home by trying to make a hit with other women. I've learned both those things—and a lot more. But I'm blest if I know just what good the knowledge is going to do me, now. Unless—unless you'll—"

HIS voice trailed off, and he looked at Lois in dumb appeal. His expression reminded her ludicrously of that of a dog which yearns for a bone and yet half fears a kick, instead. There was something almost childlike about his plea and his manner. And under their spell, Lois felt her carefully-nursed ire breaking up. To mask this annoying weakness, she said coldly:

"We are both suffering needlessly, Burke. Wont you go, please?"

"Sweetheart, give me just one more chance. Just *one* more, girl. I love you a whole lot. And I can make good. Give me a chance. I *can* make good. Why, ever since you dropped me, I've cut out drink. I've cut it *all* out. Honest, I have. And I haven't so much as touched any other woman's hand. That's true. And it's been hard not to cut loose, because there didn't seem to be anything to keep straight for. But I've done it. And now, even if you wont take me back, I'm going to keep on the same way, and travel straight, just because I love you, whether you want me or not."

"Oh, Burke!" she broke in, her voice shaking. "It's no use, I tell you. What's

done is done. We're through with each other, you and I—completely and absolutely through. Can't you understand?"

"No," he said, doggedly, "I can't. I'm going to get you back, if it takes half my life and all my cash. And when I've done that, I'm going to make you happy. There are two kinds of fools; and I'm not the kind that jams his head in the same hornet's nest a second time. So I wont worry you with drink or—or anything else. It isn't worth it. My father used to say it took more Christian grace to make some men halfway decent than to turn some others into angels. I guess he was right, at that. But I'm trying to be 'halfway decent,' anyhow, even if I can't be an angel. And I'm going to make you happy. I can do it, too. Why, Lois, I'll do everything you want me to. And I'll work like blazes; I'll work night and day; I'll make a lot more money, and you can have—"

"No! No! I tell you, Burke—"

"Don't get the idea I can't live up to what I'm promising. I've been doing it for the past six months, and it wasn't easy sledding, either. And don't get the notion that I don't know how hard it will be, just at first, to make you feel I'm going to keep on being the kind of chap you want me to be. I know you'll always be wondering if I'm drunk every time I laugh a bit loud. And I know you'll be finding yourself watching me whenever I'm introduced to some fairly good-looking woman. But I'm going to show you—"

"Burke!" she interrupted, half-crying. "Burke, listen to me! I'm—"

"I'll make it *all* up to you, girl!" he blundered on. "I'll just give up all my life to making you happy and making you forget I was ever rotten. Why, girl, I'll—"

"Burke!" she cried again, now with a sharp insistence that momentarily dammed his flood of protestations. "Listen! You *must* listen. It breaks my heart to hear you say such things and abase yourself so. And I *do* believe. And—oh, I wish, dear, I could make it easier. It's too late. It's all hopeless, because—"

"No, it isn't. It—"

"Because I'm engaged."

"You're—*what?*"

"Engaged—to Jefferson Dale. He—"

"The—the Western chap that used to be your brother's law-partner? The—?"

"Yes. He was in Nevada, investigating a mine-ownership claim. He spent two months near Reno. He asked me to marry him, the day I left, at the station. I—I told him I would. And he is coming on to meet me, to-day—this morning. He had to finish his business there, so he couldn't travel East with me. I thought it was he, when you knocked just now. When—"

"You're engaged?" he babbled. "Why—why, you're joking! You *can't* be engaged. It's—it *is* a joke, isn't it?"

"No," she answered, "it isn't a joke. I used to know him, slightly, you remember, when he was Dave's partner. He was very good to me out in Nevada, and very considerate, and—"

"And you were lonely out there. And there were no real men around. And you thought it would spite me, and—"

"You have no right to say that."

"One generally doesn't have the right to tell the truth. Maybe that's why so few folks exceed their rights. But it *is* the truth. Girl, you don't—you can't—love this—?"

"You have no right to say that, either," she blazed. "He is everything a woman should wish a husband to be. He—"

"That's probably why he's still single. A paragon of virtue is seldom—"

"At least," she said unpleasantly, "it will be a refreshing change."

BURKE CRUGER got to his feet, wearily, heavily.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm sorry I was ugly about it. And I'm sorry I started a quarrel all over again, when all I wanted was to get you to forgive me, and to let me make good. If you're engaged to another man—why, that seems to settle it. If he'll make you happy—if you *do* care for him. . . . But I don't believe you do. It's half loneliness and half spite. The two sometimes blend into something that looks like love for a while. Anyhow, since he's a chum of your brother's, your family isn't likely to make trouble, this time. I want you to be happy, dear."

"That's good of you, Burke."—and he could not tell whether she spoke in sincerity or mockery.

"But," he went on, "I doubt it. And as for him—he won't be happy. I've seen to that."

"You are threatening?"

"Yes, if you choose."

"You never heard of my engagement until five minutes ago. How can you say you've 'seen to it' that he won't be happy?"

"I *have* seen to it," he answered, briefly, cryptically. "He has trouble coming."

"You are talking nonsense."

"Perhaps."

Piqued, she strove to laugh.

"This is delightfully melodramatic," she sneered. "So you are actually going to punish a man for daring to love me."

"I *have* punished him," he corrected.

"I don't believe you."

"You seldom do. Yet, you will. So will he."

THE eager boyishness of his manner was gone. He was curt, terse, devoid of the bluster that is supposed to accompany threats. And the woman, knowing him as she did, was vaguely troubled in spite of herself.

"Good-by, dear," he said, holding out his hand. "And yet it isn't really good-by, for I don't think you're going to marry Dale. I won't bore you by giving reasons that you wouldn't believe. But I don't think you and he will marry. And—I love you always and always, girl,"—with a lapse from the hard self-control that had for the moment armored him. "I love you, and in your heart you love me. And some day—"

He checked himself, turned and left the room.

In the hallway as he walked toward the elevator, Burke Cruger came face to face with a slender man in black, who was convoyed along the passage by a sable bell-boy. Cruger stopped in his disconsolate progress and eyed the other man.

"Yes," he mused, in self-disgust: "she's right. He's as different from me as anyone could be and yet have the same number of heads and arms. He



"Burke," she interrupted, half crying. "Burke, listen to me! I'm—" "I'll make it all up to you, girl!" he blundered on.

"I'll just give up all my life to making you happy."

looks like the kind of guy that's spent his entire boyhood and youth in not causing his mother a moment's anxiety. I know the breed. They get on fine, when they reach Heaven. But down here they're a bit of a bore."

DALE, unaware of the silent judgment passed on him by the scowling, shock-haired man whom, unknowing, he had brushed past without a second glance, was meantime entering Lois Cruger's sitting-room. Had he arrived a half-hour earlier he would doubtless have appreciated the pretty "Tryst" chromo pose of his hostess. But instead he walked in on a fiancée whose eyes were troubled, and whose white forehead was creased, and who wholly forgot to pose at all.

"You look tired, little woman," said Dale, with quick solicitude, as he hurried forward to greet her. "Was the journey so very fatiguing?"

"No," she replied, brightening. "I'm all right. Just a headache. I often have them."

He put his arm around her and stooped to kiss her. She leaned to his kiss, then straightened ever so little.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I—it's none of my business," she laughed, apologetically. "but—but I thought you told me once that you didn't drink."

"I don't," he answered in astonishment. "Of course I don't. I've drunk nothing stronger than an occasional glass of beer since I left college. And even then—why, what a strange thing for you to say!"

BEER was one of Burke Cruger's few detestations, almost the only beverage he would not, and could not, endure. Hence, it chanced that Lois had never hitherto been brought into physical touch, by a kiss, with a man who had just imbibed a large glass of the golden brew. Hence too, it chanced she had been happily ignorant of the fact that a casual swallow of beer exhales an aroma which, for sheer alcoholic suggestion, puts to shame the bouquet of a pint of whisky tamped down by an equal quantity of champagne—a beer breath being

the most eloquently misleading sign of inebriety known to man, as many an inexperienced woman's spouse has learned, to the cost of his reputation.

Unconscious that the single glass of ice-cold Pilsener (which had quenched his train-born thirst on the way from the station) was fairly shrieking a denial to his words, Dale went on to ask:

"Why did you say such a queer thing, Lois? You know me well enough, don't you, to be certain I'll never cause you the misery that made your other marriage such a horror?"

"Y-es," she agreed, doubtfully, turning away her head as a rich scent of malted hops was wafted to her upon the breath of his lovely reassurance. Dale hesitated, grappled mentally with the mystery, failed to solve it, and changed the subject.

"What a very silent, subdued little woman you are, to-day!" he went on, tenderly.

She winced. The phrase "little woman," she abhorred. Never before had she known of its use, outside of story-books. She chided herself for her disloyalty to her new lover and tried to make herself believe that "little woman" was far more refined, if less comforting than was Burke's habit of calling her "girl."

But all the time, against her will, a bogey was rising, faint, yet perceptible, to scare her back from the pathway of calm. Dale had so often and so warmly commiserated with her concerning Burke's hard drinking! Her brother, she remembered, had once told her that Dale was a member of a quasi-temperance society whose members pledged themselves to taste no "vinous or spirituous liquors." Yet now, his breath—

With a shudder, she recalled what she had been through with Burke during the period of steady drinking that had preceded her divorce. She remembered the sick contempt that had been hers when nightly he had come home with a liquor-laden breath. Was she to go through the same vile ordeal once more?

Were all men alike? Burke had fibbed about drink. Was this declaration of Dale's a similar lie?

Her reason answered "No!"

Dale's breath as he bent to kiss her again, yelled: "Yes!"

And between them hung a cloud—no larger than a man's hand, yet growing.

Dale, meantime, had begun to talk of his journey hither, of the heat, the cinders, the desert dust. And tearing herself free of her gloomy musings, Lois seconded his efforts to entertain her. Except in moments when a beery wraith once more signaled a warning, she set herself to comparing his perfect, if stilted, diction, and his flawless manner and self-control, with the slangy speech and stark boyishness of the man who had preceded him.

To her amaze, Dale shone less glowingly by the comparison than he had seemed to in the Reno days.

AT last they went down to the hotel dining-room to lunch. Dale did not even suggest that they lunch cozily together in her sitting-room. Earlier, rehearsing the day's program, Lois had hoped he would ask this. Now, to her own surprise, she found herself glad he had not.

But her relief ebbed when, as they seated themselves in a window-alcove near the door, she saw Burke Cruger lunching alone, a few tables distant. Burke was not looking at them. Yet she knew he had seen them enter the restaurant. Woman-like, she was pleased that the man with her was so irreproachable in looks and bearing. She could not help hoping Burke would observe his perfections.

Lois glanced with critical approval at Dale. And as she looked, the criticism began to weigh against the approval. In Nevada, the man's low collar and old-fashioned black tie had seemed forensic, and in excellent, if coldly pure taste. Compared with the breezily rough-clad denizens of the divorce community, his attire had shown faultless. In the law offices that he and her brother had once shared, she recalled him as a pattern of sedate spruceness. Here in Chicago—

Well, he was the only man in the room, except one bald-headed and apoplectic ancient, to wear a markedly low

collar, the only wearer of an old-fashioned black tie. He alone, too, had on a frock coat.

Burke, in loose-fitting tweeds and hectic loose-tied scarf, at the near-by table, seemed to her far less correct, but strange to say, far better dressed.

Lois shut the eyes and ears of her mind to these disloyal thoughts, rebuked herself fiercely for having let them creep unbidden into her brain, and leaned forward to listen with renewed and keenly-flattering attention to a story Dale was telling her—a story that seemed to have neither start nor finish, but that was all middle—like a chestnut worm. It was an account of a peculiarly involved—and to the lay intellect, peculiarly dreary—law case, which he had lately tried and won.

Remembering Burke's fund of occasionally lurid anecdotes, Lois fell to wondering when the point of Dale's narrative would come. Then she realized this was not that type of story. Most of Burke's yarns had been ever so funny, even the horrifying ones. They had always been deliciously easy to follow. Whereas, this rhetorically tedious record of a legal battle and victory—

Lois inserted a stuffed olive into the very center of an incipient yawn, masking the gaping of her lips by the gesture. She glanced guiltily at Dale. He had not observed. She glanced covertly at Burke. He had. And he winked.

A well-modulated laugh from Dale as he leaned across the table toward her to emphasize some legally humorous point in his recital, sent to her nostrils once more the faintest dying whiff of beer. She looked again at Burke's table. Burke had always said that no meal except breakfast was a real repast unless there were something to drink with it. A water carafe was now the only form of liquid-container before him. Again she recalled the odd contradiction between Dale's breath and his sentiments. And again the bogey appeared. Or, rather, now she realized, it had never quite vanished.

"So," continued Dale, in triumphant summing up, "when they applied next day for a change of venue on the grounds of community prejudice and potential in-



"Why, hello!" repeated the newcomer, in delight, seizing the nearer of Dale's hands in a vividly-ringed grasp and shaking it with enthusiasm. "Where'd you blow in from, Mr. Lawyer-Man?"

timidation of witnesses, we retaliated, (as you will have guessed by this time, little woman,) by applying to Judge Denham for a writ of—"

"Why, hello!" cried a high-pitched and super-cordial voice over Lois' right shoulder.

She turned. Past her, from the general direction of the restaurant door, flashed a vision in heliotrope and gold,—the hair supplying, gleamingly, the latter shade,—and the wearer of these cheery hues bore down bodily upon Dale.

"Why, hello!" repeated the newcomer, in delight, seizing the nearer of Dale's hands in a vividly-ringed grasp and shaking it with enthusiasm. "Where'd you blow in from, Mr. Lawyer-Man? You must 'a' shook me at the station. It was mean of you, after our jolly trip. I was afraid I'd never see you again. No, I wasn't either. I knew you'd write, after I had gave you my address. But to think of your being the very first person I saw, the minute I set foot in this room! Aren't you going to introduce me, and to ask me to sit in?"

The heliotrope-and-gold personage paused for breath, her fusillade of rapid-fire sentences failing for dearth of air-power. She glanced smilingly from the discomfited Dale to the suddenly stony Lois.

"I'm not spoiling anything, am I?" she queried, presently.

Then, glancing from one face to the other, she added in a huff:

"Oh, I beg pardon, I'm sure, Mr. Dale. My mistake. Excuse me."

WITH a rustle of heliotrope silk and a little tornado of violet perfume, she swished haughtily away, leaving Dale staring in misery at Lois. He had not risen, nor spoken. Lois, under her stiffly down-cast lids, peeped over toward Burke's table. Cruger was grinning in infantile delight, not at the departing siren, but at Dale.

"I'm sorry that woman should have ventured to interrupt us in such an ill-bred way," began Dale, supremely uncomfortable. "I—she—she took advantage of a trifling courtesy I was able to render her on the trip from Reno, to—be abominably familiar in her manner,

and to force her acquaintanceship on me here. I am so sorry—"

"Oh, please don't apologize," said Lois, with sub-frigid sweetness. "I am only sorry you should have thought it necessary to be so rude to her just now. I hope it wasn't on my account. Why didn't you introduce her to me, as she asked you to? I am always glad to meet any of your friends."

"She is not a friend of mine. She—why, she—"

"She *seemed* most friendly, until you cut her. Why didn't you introduce her? Or—*couldn't* you introduce her?"

"No. No. It isn't that. I know nothing against her character. I know nothing one way or the other. She is leading lady, I understand, in a—a burlesque troupe that opens at the Gaiety to-night—or so I gathered from her talk. There was some trouble about her ticket. And as the Pullman conductor knew me, I was able to—"

"I see. But I still don't see why you cut her—why you didn't introduce her to me—or me to her."

"I—I didn't remember her name, for one reason," he faltered.

"No?" with icy tolerance. "Yet she remembered yours, and your profession. It is strange you should have struck up so intimate an acquaintance with a woman whose very name you don't know."

DALE was on trial for his love-life, before the highest court, commended to the mercy of the merciless. On the bench in figurative gown and wig, with the black cap conveniently within reach, sat Lois Cruger. The witnesses against the accused were manifold. One of them wore heliotrope and gold; one was a beer-laden breath; one was a semi-palpable lie; one was a lie that seemed more than self-evident.

But the star witness for the prosecution was a biting jealousy, nurtured on memory of Burke Cruger's flirtations, and brought to maturity, many months earlier, by the kiss Lois had seen exchanged between Burke and a pretty woman at the Country Club dance.

Over all the court scene brooded the Cloud, no longer the size of a man's

hand, but well-nigh blotting the firmament.

"Please don't be angry or unjust, Lois!" Dale was pleading in a manner wherein genuine innocence and ruffled dignity were very badly jostled by each other. "Let me explain."

Now never, perhaps, since the birth of time, has a really guilty man said to a woman (in the hopeless and cross tone that goes with the plea): "Let me explain." And assuredly, never since the birth of time has a woman, hearing such an appeal, believed the appellant anything but guilty.

"I don't think there is any need," said Lois. "The situation explains itself."

"It does not!" he declared, in rising wrath. "I met her on the train. She was in trouble about her ticket. The conductor—"

"So you said. Sha'n't we talk about something else—or at least try to?"

"The Pullman conductor was a former client of mine. He introduced me to her. And I—"

"Really, I'm not at all interested. Please—"

"And I advised her about the ticket. And then in the dining-car—"

"Oh, you had your meals together, then?"

"No!" he raged, "we didn't. She came up to my table in the dining-car and thanked me, and—"

"I am not especially interested in the story of a railroad flirtation. I'm afraid I can't appreciate—"

"Flirtation!" he snorted, aghast. "*Flirtation?* I am not a vulgarian. Your brother can testify that I—"

"I never suspected for a moment that you were," she denied, courteously. "Least of all, since I saw your friend in the heliotrope dress and the tinted-to-order hair."

DALE, like many another man who has spent the bulk of his life in refraining from causing his mother a moment's anxiety, had a profound and professional ignorance of women. He could not in the least realize that Lois was merely piqued by the notice the burlesque actress had attracted to their table (notably from Burke). Nor did

he dream of that drink-and-flirtation Cloud, or that it needed swift and skillful dissipating. He waded, shut-eyed, on to his doom.

"You forget yourself, Lois," he chided, loftily. "I am at a loss to account for your strange behavior to-day—your coldness when we met, your veiled hint about drinking, your latest flagrant and ridiculous accusation. I can account for it all, only on one hypothesis, a hypothesis I will not insult either of us by mentioning."

"Don't hesitate on my account to mention it," she laughed, with a flippancy that a man better versed in women's ways would have marked with alarm as a sign of tears kept back by hero-effort. "If you mean that I think we have both made a terrible mistake—or, rather, that we were on the brink of a terrible mistake—"

"EXCUSE me, people," observed Burke Cruger.

Having watched the signs alertly, he had come across, and now seated himself on an extra chair he drew up to their table.

"Excuse me for taking a hand," he added, "but I think this is my cue to 'enter, R.U.E.'"

He beamed pleasantly from one to the other. Lois' eyes flashed in a momentary fire that was quenched into a tremulously reluctant smile of welcome as her gaze met his. Noticing her look, Dale asked stiffly:

"This—this gentleman—is an acquaintance of yours?"

"Me?" put in Burke, before Lois could answer. "Sure. I'm the Late Lamented. Just now I'm the Dove of Peace, too, if you'll let me twitter at you both for a while. Mr. Dale, my name's Cruger—Burke Cruger. You'll have heard of me."

"Mr. Cruger—"

"Sit down. I'm not going to start anything. I'm just going to try to throw a little sanity into the scene. You folks have been quarreling. And, as well as I could figure out from the distant hill-top, you have just about come to the breaking-point. That's where the Dove-of-Peace act comes in."

"Mr. Cruger," interrupted Dale, "you show very little tact in intruding here. Unless this lady insists on your remaining, I must ask you to—"

"She does," said Cruger. "And I only want to stay long enough to scoop the fat out of the fire. Then, if you both like, I'll go, for keeps."

"Burke—" began Lois, then checked herself, irresolute.

"Listen, girl," said Burke: "Upstairs awhile ago, I said Mr. Dale was due for trouble, and that I'd furnished it. Well, I have. I didn't mean to. And I'd kind of like to un-furnish it again, if it'll make you any happier. What I meant was just this: When a woman has divorced one husband because of a set of vices, she's bound to go looking for just those same vices in Number Two. She doesn't know she's looking for them, but she is—always. Just as a widow's forever looking for her first husband's goodness or crankiness, in her second; and never finding it, whether it's there or not. Now—"

"Mr. Cruger," once more interposed Dale, "I fail to see any reason for prolonging this very unpleasant—"

"You'll see, presently," returned Burke, unruffled. "Where was I in the sermon? Oh, yes. I was saying that a woman's always looking for her divorced husband's rottenness in his successor. And what a woman looks for, hard enough, she's dead sure to find, whether it's a moth or her pocket or her salvation. Likewise, there's a proverb somewhere about a burnt child being leary of fires. That fits in, too. If a woman's been scorched, she's always on the look-out for another burn of the same kind. You don't get me yet, Mr. Dale?"

"I confess I do not see the trend of this rignarole, unless, to be sure, you have been drinking again. Mrs. Cruger tells me—"

"You're getting warmer, but you're still a good way off. No, I haven't been drinking, Mr. Dale. But *you* have."

"Sir! I—"

"I get it on your breath even now. Most people mightn't, for it must have happened an hour or more ago. But I'm a connoisseur. I noticed it when I passed close to you in the hall, upstairs, too.

It set me thinking. And besides, I hate beer. I can smell it a mile off. If I noticed it, Lois noticed it, too. That's right, isn't it, girl? You did, didn't you? And it's jarred you. It set you to remembering how I used to smell like a portable wine-room. And it got you to wondering if Mr. Dale mightn't secretly be a booze-fighter, too. Now didn't it? Own up."

"Burke!" she stammered. "How did you—?"

"How'd I guess? The same reason I guessed just now, when that dame with the hand-painted face flagged him, that you'd be recalling my own fool flirtations, and put *him* down in the philanthropist class. Didn't you?"

"I—"

"You canned one husband because you thought he drank too much, and needed blinders when a skirt blew past. And you were glad Mr. Dale wasn't like that. Then, to-day, you got to thinking he maybe *was* like that. And it's made you want to cry. When I saw that look jump into your eyes, I knew it was time to horn in, unless you were to be made wretched. And what I want most in the world is for you to be happy."

"MR. CRUGER!" exclaimed the indignant Dale, finding his voice once more. "I must protest against—"

"Against my trying to help you? Be patient, man. Lois, if you'd never met me, and never had any experiences such as you've been through with me—and if you'd noticed one drink on a man's breath, then, and if a woman he'd been civil to had stopped to say 'hello' to him, why, you'd never have thought a thing about it. It wouldn't have bothered you for a minute. You wouldn't have put him on the suspected-list. That's what I meant, awhile back, when I said I'd arranged trouble for Mr. Dale, even before I'd heard of him. By my own behavior I'd arranged trouble—without meaning to—for any man who might come after me, even if he was a tin-halo angel, or a martyr with whiskers and sandals. You'd be bound to be looking for my worst traits in him. And you'd find them. You *have* found them."

"Yes," she said, with an effort, assenting in spite of herself, "I have."

"Lois!" Dale gasped.

"Good!" vouchsafed Burke. "Now we're getting somewhere at last. And the sermon's over. I've told you what the deadly and poisonous liquor was that you noticed on Dale's breath, Lois. It was beer. A light summer beer, at that. The kind that might perhaps jag a man, if he took a couple of hogsheads of it, and had a weak brain to start with. And, if I guess right, your friend here hasn't had more than one glass. Am I right, Mr. Dale?"

"I had a glass of beer on the way from the station," said Dale, coldly, "—not that it is any concern of yours. It is the only form of drink I ever touch; and that very sparingly. But I protest once more against—"

"You see, Lois?" said Burke in triumph. "He's not a drinker. That lays Ghost Number One. Now for Number Two: I know men, and I know a little something of women. Take my tip, girl—this gentleman never flirted with any woman in his life. He probably wouldn't if he could. And it's a dead cinch that he couldn't if he would. As for the lady who gave him the high sign just now, if ever he had any acquaintance with her, you can be sure it wasn't by fault of his. And you can be sure that his hottest efforts as a charmer were confined to telling her about the new stamps in his album. He doesn't need blinders. He'll stand, forever and a day, without tying. Why, girl, you've got a treasure! As far as drink goes, he's a Little Brother of the Artesian Well. And, as for other things, he'd make old Sir

Galahad and Anthony Comstock look like a brace of Tenderloin rounders. He never caused his mother a moment's anxiety. And he'll never cause *you* any. He hasn't a single redeeming vice. Take my word for it. I know what I'm talking about or I wouldn't tell you; for, as I said, the thing I want most in the world is for you to be happy. And now that I've cleared things up, here's where I make my graceful exit and let you go on billing and cooing. So long."

HE got up, smiled at Lois, nodded friendly to the purple and sputtering Dale, and started away.

"Burke!"

Lois' lips scarcely moved in the monosyllable. Certainly, they gave forth no sound. Yet Burke, with his back to her, heard. And he turned around, his homely face transfigured. Picking up the chair he had just vacated, he placed it very close beside her and sat down again.

"Lois!" said Dale, harshly. "For your sake, and to avert a public scene, I have listened in patience to this man's coarse insults. But I protest against remaining at the same table with him. This is intolerable. He must leave, or else I shall."

"Don't hurry, Mr. Dale," soothed Burke.

"Yes," contradicted Lois, her eyes alight, a strange catch in her breath. "Do hurry, Mr. Dale—if you don't mind. I—I have so many things to talk over—private, *personal* things—with my husband."

IF you relish the story with the note of absolute reality in it, don't miss these month-to-month contributions of Albert Payson Terhune in *The Red Book*. They are real and they are vital, and there isn't anything like them to be found in any other magazine in the world.



The Anonymous Wiggle

By Ellis Parker Butler

ILLUSTRATED BY REA IRVIN

PHILO GURB, graduate, in twelve complete lessons, of the Rising Sun Correspondence School of Detecting, takes the trail in an affair of the heart.

ANYONE reading a history of the detective work of Philo Gubb, the paper-hanger detective, might imagine that crime stalked abroad endlessly in Riverbank and that criminals crowded the streets, but this would be mere imagination. The celebrated Correspondence School detective was obliged to spend more time hunting crimes on which to exert his skill than he was able to spend unraveling criminal mysteries.

For weeks before he took on the case of the Anonymous Wiggle, he had been obliged to revert to his side-line of paper-hanging and decorating, and his detective office in the Opera House Block had become once more the studio of an artist of the paste-brush and kalsomine pail. For weeks the nearest hint of crime he had was a conversation he overheard when passing a vacant lot on Ninth Street. From behind the high board fence a voice reached his ears saying: "Well, yesterday he stole six, didn't he?" and another voice answered: "Six! That's nothing! I stole eight myself. How many did you steal?" "Me? I only stole four."

Cautiously P. Gubb placed his paste-pail on the ground and peered over the fence. He saw two boys. "Well, four bases is a good many to steal when Skinny is pitching," said one. "He's quick as a wink." Quite as cautiously as before, P. Gubb took up his paste-pail and walked on.

No, crime is not rampant in Riverbank. The demand for detectives is far less insistent than the demand for all-over scroll, eighteen-inch repeat, mica-print wall-paper with eight-inch border to match.

P. Gubb therefore welcomed gladly Miss Petunia Scroggs, when she came to his office in the Opera House Block and said: "Mr. Gubb? Mr. Philo Gubb, the detective? Well, my name is Miss Petunia Scroggs, and I want to talk to you about detecting something for me."

"I'm pleased to have the pleasure of knowing your acquaintance, ma'am," said Mr. Gubb, placing a chair for the lady. "Anything in the detectative line which I can do for you will be so done gladly and in good shape. At the present moment of time, I'm engaged upon a job of kitchen paper for Mrs. Horton up on Eleventh Street but the same will not occupy long, as she wants it hung over what is already on the wall, to minimize the cost of the expense."

"Different people, different ways of thinking," said Miss Scroggs a little sharply. "For me, never hang paper atop of paper. Scrape it off and be clean, is my id.a."

"Yes, ma'am," said Philo Gubb. "My notion coincides with yours."

"Well, I didn't come here to talk about Mrs. Horton's notion of how a kitchen ought to be papered," said Miss Scroggs. "How do you detect, by the day or by the job?"



"Well, it may be threatening, and it may not be threatening," said Miss Scroogs. "If it is a threat I must say I never heard of a threat just like it. And if it is scurrilous I must say I never heard of anything that scurried in the words used. Read it."

"My terms in such matters is various and sundry, to suit the taste," said Mr. Gubb. "I can paper-hang for so much a roll, or so much a room, or by the day, and I do deteckating on the same terms."

"Then I'll hire you by the job," said Miss Scroogs, "if your rates aint too high, but maybe I'd better tell you what the job is, so's you'll know better how to set a price. Now, first off, I aint ever been married; I'm a maiden lady."

"Yes, ma'am," said Philo Gubb, jotting this down on a sheet of paper. "Unmarried maiden lady. I got that."

"Not but what I could have been a wedded wife many's the time," said Miss Scroogs hastily. "Some prefer husbands and some prefer peace of mind, and I choose to prefer the latter. I got a cat that stays out all night, and a canary to clean up after, and I'm as well off as if I had a husband, and better. You don't

have to darn socks for a cat, and you don't have to take no back talk from a canary. I wont say how many men I might have married—one at a time, of course—but I says to myself, 'Peace of mind, Petunia, peace of mind!'"

"Yes'm," said Philo Gubb. "I'm a unmarried bachelor man myself."

"Well, I'm surprised to hear you say it in a boasting tone," said Miss Petunia sharply. "You ought to be ashamed of it."

"Yes, ma'am," said Philo Gubb, "but you was conversationally speaking of some deteckative work—"

"And I'm leading right up to it all the time," said Miss Scroggs. "Peace of mind is why I have remained single up to now, and peace of mind I have had, but I wont have it much longer if this Anonymous Wiggle keeps on writing me letters."

"Somebody named with that cognomen is writing letters to you like a Black Hand would?" asked Mr. Gubb eagerly.

"Cognomen or not," said Miss Scroggs, "that's what I call him or her or whoever it is. Anonymous is one thing, and wiggle is another thing, and when a letter is signed with a wiggle and nothing else, I maintain I'm within my rights in calling the signer an Anonymous Wiggle. Snake would be a better name," she added bitterly, "but I must say the thing looks more like a fish worm. Now here," she said, opening her black hand-bag, "is letter Number One. Read it."

Mr. Gubb took the envelope and looked at the address. It was written in a hand evidently disguised by slanting the letters backward, and had been mailed at the Riverbank post office. It was addressed to Miss Petunia Scroggs.

"Hum!" said Mr. Gubb. "Lesson IX of the Rising Sun Deteckative Agency's Correspondence School of Deteckating gives the full rules and regulations for to elucidate the mystery of threatening letters, scurrilous letters, et cetera. Part 1, Threatening Letters; Part 2, Scurrilous Letters. The deteckative proceedings is much similarly the same in both cases, but the division is thus divided into two classes like I said. Now is this a

threatening letter or a scurrilous letter?"

"Well, it may be threatening, and it may not be threatening," said Miss Scroggs. "If it is a threat I must say I never heard of a threat just like it. And if it is scurrilous I must say I never heard of anything that scurriled in the words used. Read it."

Philo Gubb pulled the letter from the envelope and read it. It was in the same disguised hand as the address. It ran thus:

PETUNIA:

Open any book at page fourteen and read the first complete sentence at the top of the page. Gc thou and do likewise.

For signature there was nothing but a waved line, drawn with a pen. In some respects it resembled an angle worm. Philo Gubb frowned as he read the letter.

"The advice of the inditer that wrote this letter seemingly appears to be sort of unexact," he said. "'Most every book that was ever wrote is apt to have a different lot of words at the top of page fourteen.'"

"Just so!" said Miss Scroggs. "You may well say that. And say it to myself I did until I started to open a book. I'm no great shakes on reading, and I take it there are plenty of things to waste money on besides books, but my father was quite a reader in his day and, though you may not believe it, there are over fourteen books in my house at the present moment. So I went to the book-case and I took down my Bible and I turned to page fourteen. I says to myself, 'If you are going to be fool enough, Petunia Scroggs, to pay any attention to a letter-writer that signs no name but a wiggle, be on the safe side and look in the Bible. So I looked in the Bible.'"

"As the writer beyond no doubt thought you would," said P. Gubb.

"I don't know what he thought or what he didn't think," said Miss Scroggs, "but when I opened by Bible and turned to page fourteen there wasn't any page fourteen in it. It is a good-sized family Bible, and it has been in the family for generations, almost, and it is pretty well worn out, and the pages

are loose, and page fourteen is part of the 'Brief Foreword from the Translators to the Reader,' so I thought maybe it had got lost and never been missed. So I took up another book. I took up Emerson's Essays, Volume Two—Volume One of the same being I don't know where."

"And what did you read?" asked Philo Gubb.

"Nothing," said Miss Scroggs, "because I couldn't. Page fourteen was tore out of the book, whole and complete. So I went through all Pa's books, and every page fourteen was tore out of every book. There was only one book in the house that had a page fourteen left in it. So I hunted up page fourteen in that book and read the first full sentence at the top of the page."

"And what did that say?" asked Mr. Gubb.

"It said," said Miss Petunia, "'To one quart of flour add a cup of water, beat well and add the beaten whites of two eggs.'"

"Did you do all that?" inquired Mr. Gubb.

"Well," said Miss Petunia, "I didn't see any harm in trying it, just to see what happened, so I did it."

"And what happened?" asked Mr. Gubb.

"Nothing," said Miss Petunia. "In a couple of days the water dried up and the dough got pasty and molded, and I threw it out."

"Just so!" said Philo Gubb. "You'd sort of expect it to get moldy. I don't just see where there is a clue in it, but I'll think it over. Quart of flour, cup of water, two eggs—got moldy. I'll study it up, and maybe I'll find out there is a cryptogram into it somewhere. But you wouldn't call it threatening at the first look."

"No," said Miss Petunia, "and it didn't worry me much. It didn't worry me at all, although I had wasted two good eggs and considerable time trying to find out what the Anonymous Wiggle was up to. And then I got this letter Number Two."

She handed the second letter to Mr. Gubb, and he opened it and read it. It ran thus:

P. SCROGGS:

A complete study of the history and antiquities of Diocese of Ossory fails to reveal the presence of a single individual bearing the name of Scroggs from the year 1085 to date.

Like the first letter this was signed with a wavy line. Mr. Gubb studied it carefully, turned it over and over, sighed, and placed it beside the first letter on his desk.

"I don't see no sign of a threat in that," he said.

"Not unless you should say it was belittling me to tell me to my face that no Scroggs ever lived wherever that says they didn't live," said Miss Petunia. "Now here's the next letter."

Mr. Gubb took it and read it. It ran thus:

MISS PETUNIA:

For to-morrow: Rising temperature accompanied by falling barometer, followed by heavy showers. Lower temperature will follow in the North Central states and Northern Missouri.

"I shouldn't call that exactly scurrilous, neither," said Mr. Gubb.

"It aint," said Miss Petunia, "and unless you can call a mention of threatening weather a threat, I wouldn't call it a threatening letter. It didn't bother me much. I went right ahead with my housework the same as usual. And then I got this letter."

She handed Mr. Gubb the fourth letter, and he read it. It ran:

PETUNIA SCROGGS:

Trout are rising freely in the Maine waters. The Parmacheene Belle is one of the best flies to use.

Mr. Gubb, having read this letter, shook his head and placed the letter on top of those he had previously read. It was signed with the wiggle like the others.

"Speaking as a detective," he said, "I don't see anything into these letters yet that would fetch the writer into the grasp of the law. Are they all like this?"

"If you mean do they say they are going to murder me, or do they call me names," said Miss Scroggs, "they don't, and they are the same as these. Here, take them!"

Mr. Gubb took the remaining letters and read them. There were about a dozen of them. While peculiar epistles to write to a maiden lady of forty-five years, they were not what one might call violent. They were, in part, as follows:

PETUNIA:

Although a cat with a fit is a lively object, it has seldom been known to attack human beings. Cause of fits—too rich food. Cure of fits—less rich food.

MISS SCROGGS:

If soil is inclined to be sour, a liberal sprinkling of lime, well plowed in, has a good effect. Marble dust, where easily obtainable, serves as well.

MISS PETUNIA:

Swedish iron is largely used in the manufacture of upholstery tacks because of its peculiar ductile qualities.

"I don't see nothing much into them," said Mr. Gubb, when he had read them all. "I don't see much of a deteckative case into them. If I was to get letters like these I wouldn't worry much about them. I'd let them come."

"You may say that," said Miss Petunia, "because you are a man, and big and strong and brave-like. A detective has to be brave, I reckon. But when a person is a woman, and lives alone, and has some money laid by that some folks would be glad enough to get, letters coming right along from she don't know who, scare her. If I was bright like you are, Mr. Gubb, maybe I could see threats in them, but being just a plain woman like I am, I imagine threats in them. Every time I get another of those Anonymous Wiggle letters I get more and more nervous. If they said 'Give me five thousand dollars or I will kill you,' I would know what to do, but when a letter comes that says, like that one does, 'Swedish iron is largely used in the manufacture of upholstery tacks,' I don't know what to think or what to do. I'm an easy-going, kind-hearted, hard-working woman about the house, but it's no wonder I get nervous when I don't know whether Anonymous Wiggle is going to tell me in the next letter that bran and water is the best feed for calves or that Christopher Columbus discovered

America in 1492. If you get a real threat you can get ready for what might happen, but how can you get ready for a threat that don't say nothing but that the temperature is going to rise to-morrow?"

"I can see to understand that it might worry you some," said Mr. Gubb sympathetically. "What do you want I should do?"

"I want you should find out who wrote the letters and tell me," said Miss Scroggs. "If law can stop it, law shall; if not, I'll see what a poor lone woman creature can do. How much do you want to take the job as a job?"

Mr. Gubb looked at the pile of letters.

"It's going to be a hard job," he said. "If the letters told you to put money under a stone I could go to the stone and wait, but these letters don't say to do anything. I've got to snoop and shadow until I see somebody put a letter in a letter-box. I've got to try to guess out a cryptogram in these letters. It's going to be quite a job. I ought to have a hundred dollars."

"It's a good deal, but I'll pay it," said Miss Petunia. "I aint rich, but I've got quite a little money in the bank, and I own the house I live in and a farm I rent. Pa left me money and property worth about ten thousand dollars, and I haven't wasted it, so I guess I can afford a hundred dollars. So go ahead."

"I'll so do," said Philo Gubb, "and first off I'll ask you who your neighbors are."

"My neighbors!" exclaimed Miss Petunia.

"On both sides," said Mr. Gubb, "and who comes to your house most?"

"Well, I declare!" said Miss Petunia. "I don't know what you are getting at, but on one side I have no neighbors at all, and on the other side is Mrs. Canterbury. I guess she comes to my house oftener than anybody else. And I to her house, as often as I go anywhere."

"I am acquainted with Mrs. Canterbury," said Mr. Gubb. "I did a job of paper-hanging there only last week."

"Did you, indeed?" said Miss Scroggs, politely. "She's a real nice lady."

"I don't give opinions on deteckative matters until I'm sure," said Mr. Gubb. "She seems nice enough to the naked eye."

I don't want to get you to suspicion her or nobody, Miss Scroggs, but about the only clue I can grab hold of is that first letter you got. It said to look on page fourteen, and all the pages by that number was torn out of your books—"

"Except my cook book," said Miss Petunia.

"And a person naturally wouldn't go to think of a cook book as a real book, or maybe it was hid behind a flour can and she didn't see it," said Mr. Gubb. "If you stop to think out something, you'll see that whoever wrote that letter must have beforehand tore out all the page fourteens from the books in your house, for some reason."

"Why, yes!" exclaimed Miss Scroggs, clapping her hands together. "How wise you are! Now I wouldn't have thought of that in a year."

"Detectative work fetches detectative wisdom," said Mr. Gubb modestly. "I don't want to throw suspicion at Mrs. Canterbury, but Letter Number One points at her first of all. She's the one that comes to your house oftenest, so she could have the easiest work getting at your books to rip out them pages fourteen."

"O—h, yes! O—h my! And I never even thought of that!" cried Miss Petunia admiringly.

"Us detectatives have to think of things," said Philo Gubb. "And so we will say, just for cod, like, that somebody, not meaning Mrs. Canterbury particular, got at your books and ripped out the pages. Then what? She didn't think you'd have a cook book to go to. She didn't happen to think you had one. So she'd think: 'What will Miss Petunia do when she finds she hasn't any page fourteens to look at? She'll rush out to borrow a book to look at.' Now where would you rush out to borrow a book if you wanted to borrow one in a hurry?"

"To Mrs. Canterbury's house!" exclaimed Miss Petunia.

"Just so!" said Mr. Gubb. "You'd rush over and you'd say, 'Mrs. Canterbury, lend me a book.' 'What sort of a book?' she would say. 'Oh, any book!' you would answer back, and she would hand you a book, and when you looked at page fourteen, and read the first full sentence

on the page, what would you read?"

"What would I read?" asked Miss Scroggs breathlessly.

"You would read what she meant you to read," said Mr. Gubb triumphantly. "Maybe it would be a threat, and maybe it wouldn't, but just because you went into your kitchen and found a page fourteen in your cook book, the whole plan went astray, as us detectatives say. So then what? Mentioning no names, but leaving you to guess who Anonymous Wiggle is, I'll say that if I was in her place and I had written a letter to you, meaning to give you a threat in a round-about way, and it went dead, I'd write some foolish letters to you to make you think the whole thing was just foolishness. That's what I'd do. I'd write you letters about weather and tacks and cats and lime and trout, and such things, to throw you off the scent. Maybe," said Mr. Gubb, with a smile, "I'd just copy bits out of a newspaper."

"How wonderfully wonderful!" exclaimed Miss Petunia. "And you knew all that just from reading that first letter!"

"That is what us detectatives spend the midnight oil learning the Rising Sun Detective Agency's Correspondence School lessons for, and pay ten dollars for a graduate diploma for," said Mr. Gubb. "Lay members of the population can't understand that. So, if my theory is right, what you want to do when you get back home is to rush over to Mrs. Canterbury's and ask to borrow a book, and look on page fourteen."

"And then come back and tell you what it says?" asked Miss Petunia.

"Just so!" said Philo Gubb.

Miss Petunia arose with a smile, and Mr. Gubb arose to open the door for her. He felt particularly gracious. Never in his career had he been able to apply the inductive system before, and he was well pleased with himself. His somewhat melancholy eyes almost beamed on Miss Petunia, and he felt a warm glow in his heart for the poor little thing who had come to him in her trouble. He felt that he was protecting her against the wiles of Mrs. Canterbury. As he stood waiting for Miss Scroggs to gather up her feather boa and her parasol and her

black hand-bag, he looked more like a flamingo than ever.



ISS Petunia held out her hand with a pretty gesture. She was fully forty-five but she was youthful for her age. There was something almost kittenish in her manner, and the long, dancing brown curls that hung below her very youthful hat added to the effect. It was clear, too, that she had aided

nature by powdering her face well and adding a healthy glow of rouge to her cheeks. When she had shaken Mr. Gubb's hand she half-skipped, half-minced out of his office, and he closed the door.

"An admirable creature," said Mr. Gubb to himself, and he turned to his microscope and began to study the ink of the letters under that instrument. His next work must be to find the identical ink and the identical writing paper. He had no doubt he would find them in Mrs. Canterbury's home. The ink he found to be of a peculiar quality; it was a pale blue in places, deepening to a strong blue in other places, with grainy blue specks. It recalled his youthful days, when he had at times made "ink" by dissolving some of his mother's laundry "bluing" in water. He decided, rightly, that this "ink" had been made of laundry blue in a like manner. The paper was plain note-paper, glossy of surface and with blue lines and, in the upper left corner, the maker's impress. This was composed of three feathers with the word "Excellent" beneath. Doubtless the word referred to the feathers—it could not have meant the writing-paper. The envelopes were of the proper size to receive the letters but were of a somewhat different quality. They were of the sort that come two hundred and fifty in a box, each twenty-five wrapped in a band, and with "XXX Quality" on the end of the box. Mr. Gubb raised one of the sheets of paper to his nose. It bore the

unmistakable odor of toilet soap and chewing-gum.

"Dusenberry!" said Mr. Gubb, and smiled.

Hod Dusenberry kept a small store near the home of Mrs. Canterbury. Mr. Gubb had often stopped there to purchase small articles, and he well recalled the show-case with its contents of cigars, soap, gum and writing-paper. It also held pens, pencils and spool-cotton. There seemed no doubt that the coils of his investigation were tightening around Mrs. Canterbury, and he put on his hat and went out. He went to Hod Dusenberry's store. Mr. Dusenberry sat behind the counter.

"I came in," said Mr. Gubb, "to purchase a bottle of ink off of you."

"There now!" said Mr. Dusenberry self-accusingly. "That's the third call for ink I've had in less'n two months. I been meanin' to lay in more ink right along and it allus slips my mind. I told Miss Scroggs when she asked for ink that I'd see to it I had some right soon, but—"

"And what did you tell Mrs. Canterbury when she asked for ink?" asked Mr. Gubb.

"Mrs. Canterbury?" said Hod Dusenberry. "You jokin'? Maybe I ought to see into the joke, but I'm feelin' stupid to-day, I reckon. What's the laugh part?"

"It wasn't my intentional aim to furnish laughable amusement," said Detective Gubb seriously. "I asked for the knowledge. What did Mrs. Canterbury say when she asked for ink and you didn't have none?"

"She didn't say nothin', and I didn't say nothin' and nobody didn't say nothin'," said Mr. Dusenberry, "because she never asked me for no ink, never! No, sir! She don't trade here. A woman that buys a pound of perfectly good butter and then comes and says it is rancid, when I been sellin' butter longer than she's been eatin' it, can go where she pleases to trade, and I told her so long ago, and she went. That's all about Mrs. Canterbury."

The Correspondence School Detective had been leaning on the show-case, and with the shrewdness of his kind had let his eyes search its contents. In the show-

case was writing-paper of the very sort the Anonymous Wiggle letters had been written on—also envelopes strangely similar to those that had held the letters. Mr. Gubb smiled pleasantly at Mr. Dusenberry.

"I'd make a guess that Mrs. Canterbury don't buy her writing-paper off you neither?" he hazarded.

"You guess mighty right she don't," said Mr. Dusenberry.

"And maybe you don't recall who ever bought writing-paper like this into the case here?" said Mr. Gubb.

"I guess maybe I do, just the same," said Mr. Dusenberry promptly. "And it aint hard to recall, either, because nobody buys it but Miss 'Tunie Scroggs. Time and again I've tried to switch her onto tablets, like everybody uses, and time and again I've told her it don't pay to lay in that old-fashioned note-paper just for one customer, but 'Tunie is the all-firedest female I ever did see. Crazy after a husband, 'Tunie is." He chuckled. "If I wasn't married already I dare say 'Tunie would have worried me into matrimony before now, with the chance she has to come and worry. 'Tunie's trouble is that everybody knows her too well—men all keep out of her way. But she's a dandy, 'Tunie is. They tell me that when Hinterman, the plumber, hired a new man up to Derlingport and 'Tunie found out he was a single feller, she went to work and had new plumbing put in her house, just so's the feller would have to come within her reach. But he got away."

"He did?" said Mr. Gubb nervously.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Dusenberry. "He stood 'Tunie as long as he could, and then he threw up his job and went back to Derlingport. Had to, she was after him so hard. Dare say she'd have nabbed him if she'd had a few more days. They tell me she don't do nothin' much now but set around the house and think up new ways to git acquainted with men that aint heard enough of her to stay shy of her. But, as I was goin' to say, her pa used this sort of note-paper, and nothin' else will do for 'Tunie. So I sort of keep some on hand for her. Sorry I aint got no ink, Mr. Gubb."

"It's a matter of no consequential im-

portance, thank you," said Mr. Gubb, and he went out. He was distinctly troubled. He recalled now that Miss Scroggs had smiled in an impossibly winning way when she spoke to him, and that she had quite warmly pressed his hand when she departed. With his extreme fear of unmarried women, Mr. Gubb dreaded another meeting with Miss Scroggs. Only his faithfulness to his Correspondence School diploma had power to keep him at work on the Anonymous Wiggle case, and he walked thoughtfully toward the home of Mrs. Canterbury. He went to the back door and knocked gently. Mrs. Canterbury came to the door.

"Good afternoon," said Mr. Gubb. "I been a little nervous about that paper I hung onto your walls, since learning the paste I used had an over sufficiently large amount of alum into it—which, if the paste don't dry soon enough, sometimes turns the color of the paper to something else than it ought to stay. If I could take a look at it—"

"Well, now, Mr. Gubb, that's real kind of you," said Mrs. Canterbury. "You can look and welcome, and I must say I don't know anybody else that would care what happened, once the paper was on the wall. If you just wait until I excuse myself to Miss Scroggs—"

"Is she here?" asked Mr. Gubb with a hasty glance toward his avenues of escape.

"She just run in to borrow a book to read," said Mrs. Canterbury, "and she's having some trouble finding one to suit her taste. She's in my lib'ry sort of glancing through some books."

"Does—does she glance through to about near to page fourteen?" asked Mr. Gubb nervously.

"Now that you call it to mind," said Mrs. Canterbury, "that's about how far she is glancing through them. She's glanced through about sixteen, and she's still glancing. She thinks maybe she'll take 'Myra's Lover, or The Hidden Secret,' but she aint sure. She come over to borrow 'Weldon Shirmer,' but I had lent that to a friend. She was real disappointed I didn't have it."

Mr. Gubb wiped the perspiration from his face. He too would have liked at that

moment to have seen a copy of "Weldon Shirmer," and to have read what stood at the top of page fourteen.

"If it aint too much trouble, Mrs. Canterbury," he said, "I wish you would sort of fetch that Myra book out here without Miss Scroggs' knowing you done so. I got a special reason for it, in my deteckative capacity. And I wish you wouldn't mention to Miss Scroggs about my being here."

"Land sakes!" said Mrs. Canterbury. "What's up now? But you needn't be afraid of Miss Scroggs. She's just a neighbor of mine, and she's right interested in you, too. She made inquiries of me about you when you was working here. She says she thinks you are a real handsome gentleman."

Mrs. Canterbury laughed coyly and went

tery about that, for it's her mince pie recipe."

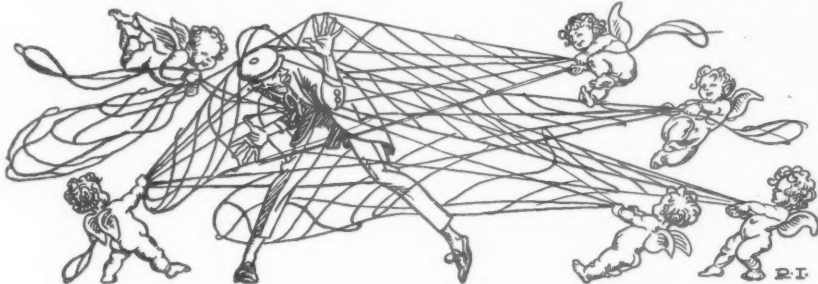
"There is often mystery hidden into mince pie recipes when least expected," said Mr. Gubb. "I see you got the book."

He took it and turned to page fourteen. At the top of the page were the words, completing a sentence—"without turning a hair of his head." Then followed the first complete sentence. It ran: "'A woman like you,' said Lord Cyril, 'should be loved, cherished and obeyed.'"

"Goodness!" exclaimed Mr. Gubb, and handed the book back to Mrs. Canterbury.

"Why did you say that?" asked Mrs. Canterbury.

"I was just judging by the book that Miss Scroggs is fond of love and affec-



out, and Mr. Gubb dropped into a chair and wiped his face again nervously. His eye, falling on the kitchen table, noted a sheet of writing-paper. It was the same style of paper as that on which the Anonymous Wiggle letters had been written. He bent forward and glanced at it. In blue ink evidently made of indigo dissolved in water, was written on the sheet a recipe. The writing, although undisguised and slanting properly, was beyond doubt the same as that of the Wiggle letters. When Mrs. Canterbury returned to the kitchen with "Myra's Lover" hidden in the folds of her skirt, the perplexed Mr. Gubb held the recipe in his hand.

"By any chance of doubt," he said, "do you happen to be aware of whom wrote this?"

"Petunia wrote it," said Mrs. Canterbury promptly, "and whatever are you being so mysterious for? There's no mys-

tion in fiction tales," he said.

"Fond of!" exclaimed Mrs. Canterbury. "Far be it from me to say anything about a neighbor lady, but if Petunia Scroggs aint crazy over love and marriage I don't know what. She'd do anything in the world to get a husband. I recall about Sim Wentworth,—Furnaces Put In and Repaired,—and how hungry Petunia used to look after him when he went by in his wagon, but she couldn't get after him because she hasn't a furnace in her house, but the minute he hung up the sign 'Chimneys Cleaned' she was down to his shop and had him up to the place, and I know it for a fact, for I took some of the soot out of her eye myself, that she courted him so hard when he got to her house that even when he went to the roof to clean the chimney she stuck her head in the fire-place and talked up the flue at him."

"Goodness!" said Mr. Gubb again. "I

guess I'll go on my way and look at your wall-paper some other day."

Mrs. Canterbury laughed.

"Just as you wish," she said, "but if Petunia had set out after you, you wout get away from her that way. She'll find some way to get your acquaintance, even if she has to hire you to detect something when there's nothing to detect."

But Mr. Gubb was already moving to the door. He heard Miss Petunia's voice calling Mrs. Canterbury, and coming nearer and nearer, and he fled.

At Higgins' book store he stopped and asked to see a copy of "Weldon Shirmer," and turned to page fourteen. "'Fate,' said the oracle," ran the first full sentence. "'has decreed that you wed a solver of mysteries.'" Mr. Gubb shivered. This was the mysterious passage Miss Scroggs had meant to bring to his eyes in an impressive manner. He was sure of one thing: whatever Fate had decreed in the case of the heroine of "Weldon Shirmer," he had no intention of allowing Fate to decree that one particular Correspondence School solver of mysteries should marry Miss Petunia Scroggs. He hurried back to his office.

At the office door he paused to take his key from his pocket, but when he tried it in the lock he found the door had been left unlocked and he opened the door hastily and hurried inside. Miss Petunia Scroggs was sitting in his desk-chair, a winning smile on her lips and "Myra's Lover, or The Hidden Secret" in her lap.

"Dear, wonderful Mr. Gubb!" she said sweetly. "It was just as you said it would be. Here is the book Mrs. Canterbury loaned me."

For a moment Mr. Gubb stood like a flamingo fascinated by a serpent.

"You detectives are such wonderful men!" cooed Miss Petunia. "You live such thrilling lives! Ah, me!" she sighed. "When I think of how noble and how strong and how protective such as you are—"

Mr. Gubb kept his bird-like eyes fixed on Miss Petunia's face, but he

pawed behind himself for the door. He felt his hand touch the knob.

"And when I think of how helpless and alone I am," said Miss Petunia, rising from her chair, "although I have ample money in the bank—"

Bang! slammed the door behind Mr. Gubb. *Click!* went the lock as he turned the key. His feet hurried to the stairs and down to the nearest street, almost falling over Silas Washington, seated on the lowest step. The little negro looked up in surprise.

"Do you want to earn half a dollar?" asked Mr. Gubb hastily.

"'Co'se Ah do," said Silas Washington. "What you want Ah shu'd do fo' it?"

"Wait a portion of time where you are," said Mr. Gubb, "and when you hear a sound of noise upstairs, go up and unlock Mister Philo Gubb, Paper-hanging and Detecting Done's door and let out the lady."

"Yassah!" said Silas.

"And when you let her exit out of the room," said Mr. Gubb, "say to her: 'Mister Gubb gives up the case.' Understand?"

"Yassah! Ah's to tek dis key an' on-lock de doah, an' let de lady out. An' whin she comes out Ah's to say: 'Mistah Gubb done give up de case.'"

"Yes," said Mr. Gubb, and he glanced up an down the street. "And say 'because—because—'"

"Yassah. 'Because—because—'"

"'Because it don't make no particle bit of difference who the lady is. Mister Gubb wouldn't marry nobody at no time of his life.'"

"Yassah!" said the little negro, and then he added, "I reckon it mus' be Miss 'Tunie Scroggs you got locked in."

"It is," said Mr. Gubb with a start. "How did you know that?"

"'Cause Mistah Rollin ercross de street he seen her go up de stair an' he give me fifty cents to sit heah an' run an' tell him when she start down stairs so's he can skip out de back do' of his store," said Silas Washington.

**Another Philo Gubb story will be in the January Red Book,
on the news-stands December 23rd.**



The Metal Knob

By Justin Huntly McCarthy

A very out-of-the-ordinary story by the man who wrote "If I Were King."

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A GRAEF

IT is a custom of the Caviar Club that any newly-elected member of that exclusive sodality shall be invited to attend a meeting of that inner circle of the club which is known as The Yarners, and shall then and there in token of his allegiance to the fellowship, tell his tale of some strange experience or curious adventure that has come his way. If his narrative pleases the palates of the listening Yarners he is chosen a member of their body. If it doesn't, he isn't.

When Feridew, the eminent mentalist, was elected last month there was a pretty full roster present in that small smoking-room specially allotted to The Yarners, and there was quite a ripple of excitement when, at the nominated hour, our worthy steward, Mr. Pash, threw open the door and in a commanding voice announced, "Mr. Feridew, gentlemen."

Instantly Leaphard, our president for

the year, arose, clasped Feridew's hand, shepherd him to a seat beside a small table, inquired politely what he would like to drink, saw him duly provided with the beverage requested, and then with a smile that was at once encouragement and benediction, left him to himself.

We were all interested to see how Feridew would acquit himself, for on previous occasions, men who had been expected to spin a good yarn had failed dismally. At the first blush, Feridew did not seem the kind of a man to have any remarkable adventure to relate. He was rather small and rather red-faced and red-haired, but there was a kind of quiet briskness about him which was not displeasing. He sat there seemingly quite at his ease, with one small leg swung over the other, and he at once began to talk, only pausing at intervals to take a refreshing swig of his drink.

I WAS stopping this summer in a little sea-town of the West Country which I will take the liberty of calling Camelot. I was there just for rest and quiet, golf and sea-bathing and sun. As it happened, I got very little of any of them, especially sun. The weather is apt to be fitful and capricious in Cornwall, and last July was for the most part as rainy as April and as chill as October.

I had comfortable lodgings overlooking the golf-links and the low range of near hills that hoop in the little places and collect the sea-winds. "Here," said I, "if anywhere, is ease to be found with peace." Really I felt that I needed both. I had been working pretty hard at my book on "Hallucinations." The subject had got rather on my mind, and my nerves, and I was wishful to get rid of it for a spell. Indeed I had been fairly hag-ridden by my task. "La Belle Dame Sans Merci hath thee in thrall," I told myself, quoting my beloved Keats, "and you must shake yourself free of her thralldom for a bit." So I took a holiday and took a friend's advice and came to Camelot.

Camelot is the queerest conceivable mixture of the old world and the new. I am what I might describe as a limited explorer, and within the radius of a couple of miles or so, I like to know the in's and out's of any place where I am staying. So it happened that within a few yards, so to speak, from glaring golf-links that were honest downs a quarter of a century ago, and the staring new hotel, I came upon an ancient church and an ancient churchyard, and saw things that touched me and things that amused me with that attenuated humor which lingers, uncongruously, over old country churchyards. There was a royal coat of arms on the wall which stirred me profoundly, for it was dated 1653, a year when Cromwell and his Commonwealth were all a-growing and a-blowing, and the second Charles was a beggar in exile, and it showed the Cornish courage to fly the sacred flag.

But it is the inscriptions that attract me most in such places. There are some that are served out like prescriptions. "Afflictions sore" and the rest of it I have often encountered, and I encountered it

here. On the other hand I have seldom failed to find some one epitaph of especial interest to enrich my collection of headstone literature, and sure enough I found such here.

It ran: "Julian Fall. In the innocence of her twentieth year. L.B.D.S.M., 1653."

I do not remember ever before to have come across the name "Julian" as a woman's given name, and the discovery interested me. The date oddly enough was that of the royal arms in the church. As for initials, I decided, after a little cogitation, that they might very well stand for "*Laus Beatae Divinae Sanctae Mariae*." No doubt there were Catholics in those days in the West Country, if there are not very many there now. It was only as I was coming away that it caught my fancy that those initials might also serve for the words, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci."

It was the third morning, I think, after my arrival in Camelot. I had done a strenuous time the previous day—a dip in the sea, three full rounds of golf, a rattling good dinner with liberal grog allowance, and a long stroll over the downs at night with a pleasant golf-club acquaintance, my antagonist of the day. It had been a hot day, one of the few days of sun in that ugly July; it was a high starry night after a splendidly red sunset. We talked philosophy; we talked poetry. I insisted on quoting my favorite poem, Keats' masterpiece. I can hear myself declaiming, "I saw their starved lips through the gloom," and all the rest of it, to the odorous evening and my patient friend. I was in wild spirits; I was inspired; I settled everything.

It was no doubt a consequence of this crowded day that I slept to oversleeping, and woke in a glow of morning sunlight. The open window was close to my bed-head, and by reaching a hand I could run up the blind and admit unimpeded day. Usually I tumble out of bed at once, but on this morning I felt lazy, if not languid, and I lolled at ease. Lying thus I found myself taking a faint interest in my reflection in a metal knob at the end of my bed.

Folk who sleep in a metal bed must note sometime or other that they can see

themselves reflected in the knobs that round off the lower posts. So now, reclining, I looked at my other self in the yellow globe with mild curiosity.

My other self! There must be something funny in the lighting of the room, I thought, to make my reflection seem so unfamiliar. How did it come about that my hair, which is short and red, should seem to make a large black patch upon the mirrored pillow? What quaint effect of shadow could cause that?

My interest was still but faintly aroused. It did not matter very much if my hair looked dark or fair in the metal of a bed-knob. It did not really matter if it seemed to overflow pillow and sheet like a wave, like a mane. Still, I sat up in bed to study this eccentricity of reflection more nearly. The eccentricity increased with my action, for while I moved, the image in the metal globe stayed motionless. Clearly what I seemed to see was some trick of light and shadow. Yet it looked like a reflection, should be a reflection.

My glance swerved to the left-hand knob. There I saw myself plainly, in my striped night-coat, with my red thatch as assertive as the bristles of a brush. Instantly I flashed back to the right-hand knob. What I had seen before dimly, I now saw clearly; it was indeed a reflection, but no reflection of me—a reflection of some one else, the reflection of a woman, of a girl, asleep.

The sleeping face showed young, not more than eighteen or nineteen: attractive, therefore, with the attraction of youth, but attractive also with a charm that seemed exotic. You will of course understand that the image which I saw was so small that it did not allow for very complete observation. The sleeper's hair had come loose and tumbled around her. One arm, bare from the elbow, lay upon the counterpane.

I sank on my pillow with a gasp, my gaze still fixed on the bewildering globe. I could still see it quite clearly. It was no juggle of light and shade but a precise picture of a pretty girl asleep in bed.

I closed my eyes to screen my mind for thought. Was this vision a creation of indigestion or of mental or visual disturbance? Had I been working so hard

at hallucinations that I was myself hallucinated?

Presently I opened my eyes again and peeped at the knob, hoping, if not trusting, that I should find all normal again. Far from it. Now I perceived that the girl in that metal sphere was awake—and not merely awake but actively engaged in emerging from her bed. Before I could avert discreet eyes, she had slipped from her sheets and was poised before her mirror in her night-gown.

Now I am sure you will accept me as a man who would not dream of obtaining a surreptitious advantage over any young woman by playing *Peeping Tom* to her morning toilet; so I averted my gaze from the globe until such time had passed as I imagined sufficient to permit a young lady to become presentable. Fairly presentable I found her when I ventured to look again, for she was in what I believed is called her petticoat-body, and was as much clothed as she would be at the county ball.

I saw her more plainly now, appreciating her clear, almost tawny skin, her shapely features, her dark eyes, her supple figure. Whoever this visionary creature might be, she was of most exquisite texture and presence, and I found myself, absurdly enough, consumed with an intense desire to approach her, to woo her. If it had been possible for me to translate myself from my appreciative world into whatever world that marriage represented, I should have cheerfully resigned all the honors and laurels for which as an ambitious man of science I yearn, if in exchange I might have shared—of course, in all honorable wedlock—the chamber of that enchanting maiden.

For a second I looked away. When I looked again the maiden had disappeared and the field of metal showed no more than a confused blur.

In another second I was bending over the knob and studying it closely. I saw now, what I had not noticed before, that it was not really a bed-knob at all, or at least not one belonging to the bed in which I slept. It was not of the same shape, being a more perfect sphere, and it did not seem to be of the same metal. If it was brass, it was brass of some cu-



She did not see me, or at least did not heed me, but swept swiftly past within a few feet of where I stood.

rious blend unfamiliar to me. As I scrutinized it now, it seemed to reflect nothing, but I thought that I detected on it certain faint and partially obliterated scratchings which seemed to represent the continents of the earth. When I took hold of it, it came away easily from its supporting bed-spike without any unscrewing; and I found that it was hollow, with a small hole at the base which was large enough to go loosely over the projection. There was a brace of figures on either side of this aperture, and I made them out to be sixteen on one side and fifty-three on the other.

AS soon as I was dressed I summoned my landlady, Mrs. Devenish, and questioned her guardedly on the subject of the bed-knob. I pointed out that it did not match with its presumed fellow and asked her how I came to be provided with a harlequin bed.

"Well, sir," said the good woman, pleasantly explanatory, "I bought that bedstead at a sale, and I got it cheap because it wanted a knob. I thought that I could likely find a knob somehow that would serve the turn. Sure enough, one day, my little boy came to me with that other knob you have noticed, in his hand. 'See here, Mother,' says he, 'how would this do for your bedstead?' I asked him where he had found it, and he said he had been playing with some other children in the old churchyard yonder and found it lying underneath some bushes. It wasn't of any value and nobody had any claim on it, so when I found that it would go on the bed-spike I just left it there, although it doesn't, as you say, make a pair."

I thanked Mrs. Devenish and dismissed her, and went about my business,—or tried to do so—my business of rest and pleasure. Well do I say I tried to do so, for between me and my golf and me and my bathing and me and my meals and me and my reading of cheap novels, there came always the glitter of that queer old metal globe and the thought of the girl's face and form that I saw, or seemed to see, therein.

Time and again I saw her there, and every time with greater clearness and a greater appreciation of her beauty. I only

saw her in the mornings, and always she was either in bed or dressing after bed, and in obedience to my sense of discretion, under these conditions I only permitted myself occasional glimpses of her. At night, curiously enough, the mysterious globe seemed to reflect nothing, though my room was lighted with electric light, and bright enough in all conscience.

Doing my best to find a meaning for the problem that puzzled me, I finally decided to accept it as some obscure form of telepathy as unexplained as unexplainable. The one thing clear in my muddled mind was that the girl was somewhere near me and that the girl ought to be found. It seemed to me, though I could not say why I believed this, that she must be threatened with some danger, and therefore her apparition was calling to me, though why to me in special, was more than I could conjecture.

As a consequence of this unsettled state of mind, I abandoned golf and bathing and every other relaxation, and spent my time in tramping all over Camelot, through wide streets and by-streets, between rows of new houses and tortuous lanes of ancient houses, ever expecting that somehow, somewhere I should come across the girl of the metal globe. But my peregrinations were vain and empty. I encountered no one in the least like the lady of the metal globe, and unreasoning, unreasonable disappointment made me sick at heart. I resolved to end my insane quest, to quit Camelot forever. This resolution seemed to cheer and strengthen me, and on the eve of my intended departure,—a wild wet day it was, too,—I went for a tramp along the sands in the hope of doing something to walk off the sense of care that haunted me.

The coast in this region consists of a series of small bays scooped at frequent intervals out of the face of the land. From Camelot itself in either direction you can walk by the sands at low tide to most of these little indentations. Worried of mind and sluggish of body, I set out on this afternoon to follow the coast line to the right, in hope that between the throes of my physical fatigue and mental activity I might find some credible con-

clusion of the puzzle that so perplexed me.

A little while I found myself in a region of the shore that seemed as lonely as if I were a *Friday-less Crusoe*. A succession of small, gaunt bays began to have a chilling effect upon my already depressed spirits. Each seemed so empty; each gave me the glum impression of a blackened hearthstone in a ruined house. You know the kind of feeling I mean. I had it in my mind to turn back and find companionship in the warmth and shelter of the club, for a great pile of boulders seemed to deny any comfortable approach to the next bay. But a certain doggedness urged me forward; the rocky obstacle proved more easily negotiable than I had expected. I entered a vaster bay than any I had hitherto traversed, with a platform of sand lying cradled between two arms of cliff that sloped on either side.

Suddenly on the crest of this cliff I was aware of something black, and a streak of red and then a patch of black again. You know the queer way in which bits of color impinge themselves upon your consciousness, ages—as it seems—before you realize the forms to which these bits of color belong.

I seemed to have been a long time familiar with these dabs of black and red, before my intelligence resolved them into the terms of existing things.

The first black was the head of a great horse; the red was the scarlet dress of a woman that was his rider; the second black was the cloud of the woman's hair trailing behind her in the wind. Horse and rider paused for an instant on the lip of the cliff, and from the graduation of their appearance to me I could guess that they had come up a slope. The horse was really a huge animal, and the contrast between his midnight and the sunset fury of the woman's gown was startling. What the woman was like I could not see at such a distance, but the general impression was of youth.

The woman swung her steed to the left, where a narrow path that was little more than a footway followed the curve of the cliff to the shore. To my amazement and alarm she took the declivity at the gallop, and I stood there like a

stock, gaping and expecting every instant to see the horse come down and its reckless burden hurled over the cliff. But in a few seconds she had reached the foot of the slope, and guiding her horse to the right, began to gallop at full speed across the level sands in the teeth of the shrieking wind that shook her hair in a sable trail behind her. She did not see me or at least did not heed me, but swept swiftly past within a few feet of where I stood. And as she did so, I gave a great cry, the involuntary utterance of my wonder. For the face of this furious rider was the face of the girl that I sought, the face I had seen so strangely in the metal knob. Though my recognition was instant, she was already well away. I shouted wildly for her to stop, but my words were buffeted to nothingness by the gale. I started to run after her, still futilely calling, but I could make little progress in the face of the blast that seemed powerless to retard the rider's course.

BY the time I had run three yards she was at the foot of the other slope and was urging her tireless charger to make the ascent. While I was still stumbling and calling, she tore up the slope with a speed that made me dizzy. As she had descended safely, so now she ascended, and before I could reach the foot of the cliff she disappeared over its summit.

As soon as I could get my breath mentally as well as physically, I set myself to the task of scaling the slope and seeing what lay beyond the top. But the climb which this wild Valkyrie took at a hand-gallop, proved no small strain to my civic legs, and I was far from sorry when I reached my goal and stood on the crest of the cliff. Then I understood why my mysterious rider had come so oddly into view.

The downs here fell sharply away from the lip of the cliff in a great hollow of that kind which in other parts of England is called by some such name as "The Devil's Punch-Bowl." At the bottom of this basin of treeless green stood a house of a kind that one could hardly expect to see in such a place. It was an odd medley of manor-house and farmhouse that had evidently been originally

erected somewhere about the middle of the sixteenth century.

You all know the way some old houses have of asserting a kind of ethical quality which seems to have nothing to do with its architectural construction. There are houses that look as genial as a character of Dickens, and there are others that chill with a sinister blend of terror and malevolence. This house belonged with emphasis to the sinister breed. Its dull, straight lines, its dull gray hue, its dull windows that looked like shut eyes which you feared to see open, all combined to give it a character that inspired repulsion in an unreasoning degree.

Now as I approached the house, the great gate opened and the girl came out. She looked as if she expected me, and she stood still while I descended the slope. I was not surprised at her action or at her beauty, though it was greater than I had guessed. She was no longer in her ruddy riding-gear, but had shifted into some kind of a woman's household wear that I took for granted. It was her face I was thinking of, and her body, and not of the clothes that covered it.

She advanced a little way over the grass, looking at me frankly with calm face and smiling eyes, and my commonplace personality was all of a twitter.

"Are you following me?" she asked quietly. I nodded. If I could have spoken I would have told her that I was ready to follow her to the end of the world. But I found that I could not speak. She seemed to be pleased by my silence.

"Many have followed me," she said simply.

Suddenly I found my tongue.

"I have been looking for you," I said hotly.

Her eyes still smiled, though her face was as calm as smooth water.

"Many have looked for me," she said slowly, "and many have found me, and wished that they had failed to find me. How did you find me?"

Thereupon I straightway told her of the metal knob and of the visions I had seen therein, and her smile floated between a frown and a laugh.

"I can read that riddle," she said; then she added as an afterthought, "I trust that you observed decorum."

I assured her that I had been commendably discreet, and ere I had made a finish she made me a beckoning sign and turning, led the way into the house.

The house into which I followed her was one of those strange old country houses that you always seem to have been in before. Oddly enough, I saw no servants about the place, though there must have been many to keep it so trim. She led me up a great flight of worm-eaten oak stairs to a great oak-paneled room which I knew to be her bed-chamber and which she bade me, with no shadow of embarrassment, enter. She pointed to a table in the window on which there stood a mirror of seventeenth-century workmanship, and on the top of that mirror was fixed a metal sphere.

I hurried forward to examine it and found it the very counterpart of my bed-knob at Mrs. Devenish's lodgings, save that it had suffered less from the passage of time, and in consequence the tracing of the continents was clearer and the date 1653 unmistakably plain.

"That mirror," she said, after I had made an end of peering, "was made for an ancestress of mine." Her voice was exquisitely clear and soft, a delight to hear, and it seemed enchantingly natural that I should be standing there, and listening to it, at last. "It was made for her by a lover of hers who was a cunning worker in metals." She paused for a moment and flashed a question at me. "Did you ever hear of sympathetic gold?"

It seemed to me dimly that I had heard of sympathetic gold; that its working was one of those queer lost arts of the Middle Ages; that any two pieces of it could be tuned to reflect each other at any distance, positive and negative. After all, the thing was not more amazing than wireless telegraphy.

"It may be," the girl continued thoughtfully, "that my namesake's lover loved my namesake so hotly that he was wishful to see her wherever he might be, or it may be that he distrusted her so deeply that he wished always to keep a sure watch upon her. But he died at last, as all men die, and they buried his globe of gold in his grave with him, and it is strange that it should have come into your hands after all these years."

As for me that listened, I did not care how strange the thing might be. All I knew was that I was glad it had come into my hands since it had afforded me knowledge of this marvelous maid. And I told her so, there and then, with unlooked for frankness and a volume of eloquence hitherto uncommandable by me. And the girl listened calmly and did not seem at all displeased by my passion and its avowal.

"You are very sure that you love me," she said, and her eyes scanned my face strangely.

"As sure as I am of my own existence," I answered stoutly, for indeed I was all on fire with a madness for the maid, that was at once boyish and manly and that was strong to the unseating of reason.

She smiled a strange smile. "Follow me," she commanded.

She opened a door and I followed her into the air. The garden was not cheering. All the coloring was muted; a world of degraded greens was frowned over by a sky of flattened grays and blacks. Ugly clouds curled about the tops of the wall of cypresses, sluggish, reptilian, seemingly gorged with water. The whole place looked like a piece of fen-land. But the sight of it seemed to please my guide, for her eyes brightened and her smile heightened.

"Come," she cried eagerly. "Come and see the best I have to show." And as she spoke she set off over the damp grasses and between the dank trees till we came to a clearing in a corner where a space of grass and flowers was studded

with miniature tombstones that showed strangely white, as white things are apt to do under a lowering sky. The girl pointed to this unexpected grave-yard with an air of triumph, and in obedience to her gesture I drew nearer and looked closer.

It certainly was a queer little collection of headstones. One of them was inscribed to the memory of a dog called Tray. Another recorded the regretted demise of a cherished parrot somewhat tritely and ineptly nicknamed Poll, but



"Those stones are only so many jests. They mark the graves of my lovers."



the triteness and ineptness were in a measure redeemed by a citation from a Latin poet who was a famous lover. Several other stones testified to the graces of departed cats, for whose sake inscriptions in learned languages were chiseled.

While I surveyed this odd little ne-

ropolis, the girl watched me with a tantalizing smile that seemed to challenge speech.

"You seem to be fond of animals," I said, not very well knowing what to say. "You must have had a number of pets."

The girl laughed.

"They were not really pets," she said softly, "though I suppose we may agree to call them animals. Those stones are only so many jests. They mark the graves of my lovers."

She said this as calmly as if she had been commenting upon the weather. I was amazed and no doubt showed my amazement. She shook her sweet body with very pretty laughter.

"You do not believe me," she said, "but indeed I am speaking the truth. You do not really suppose that you are the only man who has ever fallen in love with me?"

I was all agog to protest my assurance that so foolish a thought had never come to me, but she did not pay any heed to my assurances.

"Neither Helen nor Cleopatra," she asserted, "has been more sought after than I, albeit I am but in the innocence of my twentieth year."

"The innocence of my twentieth year," I repeated. The words were familiar to me. Suddenly there came before my mind's vision the sight of a dull gray stone with those very words carved upon it. I looked quickly at her, and she met my eyes with a full glance from hers, so laughing and alluring that she seemed to wrap me up in her warm and amorous gaze, so that a moment's chill of feeling passed as if it had never been. We rested thus for what seemed an age-long time, and I know quite well what message my eyes must have carried to hers.

She faced me, half in appeal, as it seemed, and half in defiance.

"You want to win me, I suppose," she said, and her eyes teased and her lips allured. I cried back, "Yes" very hotly, and meant it.

"So did these," the girl said demurely, and pointed to the phalanx of graves with their mendacious headstones. "And they paid the penalty of their longings."

There was a vicious ring of triumph in her voice. I stared at her stupidly. It

was beginning to rain a little, and the drops as they fell made a flat noise on the leaves and grass.

"What do you mean?" I stammered. She answered with a question.

"Are you in love with me?"

"From the bottom of my heart," (please forgive the ludicrously unscientific phrase,) I answered.

"Many men have spoken so," she said, "and when they say so I ask them if they are willing to risk their lives for their love. Would you do as much?"

Her large brown eyes seemed to grow larger, and she leaned towards me so that her exquisite face almost touched mine. My heart seemed as if it would burst from longing for her, and the next moment I had shouted "Yes."



Suddenly she flung her arms around my neck and kissed me on the lips.

"Very well," she said, "if you will play a game at cards with me we shall see. If you win, I am yours. But if I win, you must kill yourself and take your place in my little graveyard. I think I shall call you my treasured tortoise — you remind me of a tortoise, because you move slowly, mind and body, slowly but surely."

She laughed sweetly as she spoke.

"Come," she said, and extending her hand, she took mine in it and led me to the house.

On the tiled floor of the hall stood a small oak table. She went towards it, drawing from her pocket as she did so, a curious pack of cards that was plainly very old. This she laid on the table; and leaning her two palms upon it, she looked compellingly up at me.

"We will cut," she said, "—the best two out of three. If you win, I am yours forever. I shall love you, love you..."

I stepped forward, lulled by her words, no longer considering the possibility of losing and lying in the horrible graveyard outside, remembered only as a cherished tortoise.

I put out my hand and cut the cards. To my joy, I had cut a nine. She cut and showed me a ten. I shuffled the cards feverishly and cut again. I showed a five. She cut and showed me an eight.

I had lost.

She laughed and came around the table to where I stood. Suddenly she flung her arms round my neck and kissed me on the lips.

"Your life is forfeit," she said softly.

"It is your own fault. You should not have called me *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*."

A frightful chill ran through me and I recoiled from the pressure of her arms. Her lips had felt icy on mine. One thought kept hammering through my brain, and that was that I had pledged myself to die.

"Let me go," I said. "I can go to the beach and drown."

"I walked towards the door when her voice came commandingly to me.

"No, Tortoise," she said, "I do not wish you to do it like that. Come here to-morrow at the same time, so that I can see you die. By that time also, I will have a little grave ready for my tortoise."

"Who, and what are you?" I cried suddenly, and her answer came softly.

"My name is Julian Fall."

Without a backward look, without another word, I stumbled heavily out of the house, out of the gate, into the open. How I got back to Mrs. Devenish I do not remember. I had only one fixed idea in my head and that was that the next day I must go back to Julian Fall, kill myself before her, and be buried as her tortoise. It never crossed my mind that I need not do it. It seemed to me that it just had to be. . . .

HE was silent for so long a time that at last our president broke the silence.

"Well?" he queried.

"Well," answered Feridew, "I went the next day and there was nothing but a ruin that had been destroyed by fire ages earlier. Fire-blackened bricks, a gutted house, and in the middle of what must have been the hall, an old tall tree that would have taken a century to reach its maturity."

As Feridew finished his narrative he raised his glass to his lips and slowly drained it, as if in that act he was pledging some sacred memory. Then without a word he rose and quitted the room, closing the door softly behind him.

The Caviars stared at one another in silence. "A queer story," said some one, "a deuced queer story."

Parling, who is nothing if not psychological volunteered an explanation.

"A deuced strong and malign spirit like that confined in such an environment might easily manifest herself to one who had, as it were, put himself into communication with her by learning something of her past history."

Some of us smiled. "That doesn't explain the sympathetic metal," Barstone objected. Leaphard shrugged his shoulders.

"There is," he suggested in his gentlest voice, "at least the possibility that it may not be true."

This idea had occurred to others, and many wise heads wagged agreement. The smoking-room door opened as softly as it had been closed. Feridew inserted his red head.

"I forgot to mention," he said, "that Dr. Keyser, whom Mrs. Devenish called in, diagnosed the case as a touch of sun. As if one could have a touch of sun in an English July!"

NEXT MONTH'S STORY by Justin Huntly McCarthy is called "Two Men in Love." It is as different from the one you have just read as "The Metal Knob" is from "April's Lady" or "The Hare of March." That's one fine feature of Red Book stories: you don't find that sameness in these pages which tires you in so many magazines. We go on the theory that the story you will like best tomorrow is the one which differs most from the story you read to-day. That means more work for editors and writers, but it also means a newer, more readable magazine.

God's Country—

THE NEW NOVEL OF THE NORTH BY

By James
Oliver Curwood

CHAPTER XX

IN the course of nearly every human life there comes an hour which stands out above all others as long as memory lasts. Such was the one in which Philip crouched in the dog-pit, his hand at Captain's collar, waiting for the sound of a cry or shot. So long as he lived he knew that this scene could not be wiped out of his brain. As he listened, he stared about him and the drama of it burned into his soul. Some intuitive spirit seemed to have whispered to the dogs that these tense moments were heavy with tragic possibilities, for them as well as the man. Out of the surrounding darkness they stared at him without movement or sound, every head turned toward him, forty pairs of eyes upon him like green and opal fires. They too were waiting and listening. They knew there was some meaning in the attitude of this man crouching at Captain's side. Their heads were up. Their ears were alert. Philip could hear them breathing. And he could feel that the muscles of Captain's splendid body were tense and rigid.

Minutes passed. The owl hooted nearer; the wolf howled again, farther away. Slowly the tremendous strain passed and Philip began to breathe easier. He figured that Josephine and the half-breed had reached last night's meeting place. He had given them a margin of at least five minutes—and nothing had happened. His knees were cramped, and he rose to his feet, still holding Captain's chain. The tension was broken among the beasts. They moved; whimpering sounds came to



She had turned and was looking back toward the room where she had left her husband.

him; eyes shifted uneasily in the gloom. Fully half an hour had passed when there was a sudden movement among them. The points of green and opal fire were turned from Philip, and to his ears

And the Woman

THE AUTHOR OF THE "KAZAN" STORIES

Illustrated by
William Oberhardt

came the clink of chains, the movement of bodies, a subdued and menacing rumble from a score of throats. Captain growled. Philip stared out into the darkness and listened.

And then a voice came, quite near:

"Ho, M'sieur Philip!"

It was Jean! Philip's hand relaxed its clutch at Captain's collar, and almost a groan of relief fell from his lips. Not until Jean's voice came to him, quiet and unexcited, did he realize under what a strain he had been.

"I am here," he said, moving slowly out of the pit.

On the edge of it, where the light shone down through an opening in the spruce tops, he found Jean. Josephine was not with him. Eagerly Philip caught the other's arm, and looked beyond him.

"Where is she?"

"Safe," replied Jean. "I left her at Adare House, and came to you. I came quickly, for I was afraid that some one might shout in the night, or fire a shot. Our business was done quickly to-night, m'sieur!"

He was looking straight into Philip's eyes, a cold, steady look that told Philip what he meant before he had spoken the words.

"Our business was done quickly!" he repeated. "And it is coming!"

"The fight?"

"Yes."

"And Josephine knows? She understands?"

"No, m'sieur. Only you and I know. Listen: To-night I knelt down in darkness in my room, and prayed that the soul of my Iowaka might come to me. I felt her near, m'sieur! It is strange—you may not believe—but some day you



Advancing toward him down the hall was a figure clad in a flowing white night-robe.

may understand. And we were there together for an hour, and I pleaded for her forgiveness, for the time had come when to save our Josephine I must break my oath. And I could hear her speak

to me, m'sieur, as plainly as you hear that breath of wind in the tree-tops yonder. Praise the Holy Father, I heard her! And so we are going to fight the great fight, m'sieur."

Philip waited. After a moment Jean said, as quietly as if he were asking the time of day:

"Do you know whom we went out to see last night—and met again to-night?" he asked.

"I have guessed," replied Philip. His face was white and hard.

Jean nodded.

"I think you have guessed correctly, m'sieur. It was the baby's father!"

AND then, in amazement, he stared at Philip. For the other had flung off his arm, and his eyes were blazing in the starlight.

"And you have had all this trouble, all this mystery, all this fear because of him?" Philip demanded. His voice rang out in a harsh laugh. "You met him last night, and again to-night, and *let him go*? The one man in the whole world I would give my life to meet—and you, Jean Croisset, afraid of him? My God, if that is all—"

Jean interrupted him, laying a firm, quiet hand on his arm.

"What would you do, m'sieur?"

"Kill him," breathed Philip. "Kill him by inches, slowly, torturingly. And to-night, Jean. He is near. I will follow him and do what you have been afraid to do."

"Yes, that is it. I have been afraid to kill him," replied Jean. Philip saw the starlight on the half-breed's face. And he knew, as he looked, that he had called Jean Jacques Croisset the one thing in the world that Jean could not be: a coward.

"I am wrong," he apologized quickly. "Jean, it is not that. I am excited, and I take back my words. It is not fear. It is something else. Why have you not killed him?"

"M'sieur, do you believe in an oath that you make to your God?"

"Yes. But not when it means the crushing of human souls. Then it is a crime."

"Ah!" Jean was facing him now, his

eyes aflame. "I am a Catholic, m'sieur—one of those of the far North, who are different from the Catholics of the South, of Montreal and Quebec. Listen! To-night I have broken a part of my oath; I am breaking a part of it in telling you what I am about to say. But I am not a coward, unless it is a coward who lives too much in fear of the Great God. What is my soul compared to that in the gentle breast of our Josephine? I would sacrifice it to-night—give it to *Wetiko*—lend it forever to hell if I could undo what has been done. And you ask me why I have not killed, why I have not taken the life of a beast who is unfit to breathe. Does it not occur to you that there must be a reason?"

"Besides the oath? Yes?"

"And now, I will tell you of the game I played, and lost, m'sieur. In me alone Josephine knew that she could trust, and so it was to me that she bared her sorrow. Later, word came to me that this man, the father of the baby, was following her into the North. That was after I had given my oath to Josephine. I thought he would come by the other waterway, where we met you. And so we went there, alone. I made a camp for her, and went on to meet him. My mind was made up, m'sieur. I had determined upon the sacrifice: my soul for hers. I was going to kill him. But I made a mistake. A friend I had sent around by the other waterway met me, and told me that I had missed my game. Then I returned to the camp—and you were there. You understand this far, m'sieur?"

"Yes. Go on."

"The friend I had sent brought a letter for Josephine," resumed Jean. "A runner on his way north gave it to him. It was from M'sieur Adare, and said they were not starting north. But they did start soon after the letter, and this same friend brought me the news that the Master had passed along the westward waterway a few days behind the man I had planned to kill. Then we returned to Adare House, and you came with us. And after that—the face at the window, and the shot!"

Philip felt the half-breed's arm quiver.

"I must tell you about him, or you will not understand," he went on, and there was effort in his voice now. "The man whose face you saw was my brother. Ah, you start! You understand now why I was glad you failed to kill him. He was bad, all that could be bad, m'sieur, but blood is thicker than water, and up here one does not forget those early days when childhood knows no sin. And my brother came up from the South as canoe-man for the man I wanted to kill! A few hours before you saw his face at the window I met him in the forest. He promised to leave. Then came the shot—and I understood. The man I was going to kill had sent him to assassinate the Master of Adare. That is why I followed his trail that night. I knew that I would find the man I wanted not far away."

"And you found him?"

"Yes. I came upon my brother first. And I lied. I told him he had made a mistake, and had killed you—that his life was not worth the quill from a porcupine's back if he remained in the country. I made him believe it was another who fought him in the forest. He fled. I am glad of that. He will never come back. Then I followed over the trail he had made to Adare House, and far back in the swamp I came upon them, waiting for him. I passed myself off as my brother, and I tricked the man I was after. We went a distance from the camp—alone—and I was choking the life from him, when the two others that were with him came upon us. He was dying, m'sieur! He was black in the face, and his tongue was out. Another second—two or three at the most—and I would have brought ruin upon every soul at Adare House. For he was dying. And if I had killed him all would have been lost!"

"That is impossible!" gasped Philip, as the half-breed paused. "If you had killed him—"

"All would have been lost," repeated Jean, in a strange, hard voice. "Listen, m'sieur. The two others leaped upon me. I fought. And then I was struck on the head, and when I came to my senses I was in the light of the campfire, and the man I had come to kill was over me.

One of the other men was Thoreau, the free trader. He had told who I was. It was useless to lie. I told the truth—that I had come to kill him, and why. And then—in the light of that campfire, m'sieur—he proved to me what it would have meant if I had succeeded. Thoreau carried the paper. It was in an envelope, addressed to the Master of Adare. They tore this open, that I might read. And in that paper, written by the man I had come to kill, was the whole terrible story, every detail—and it made me cold and sick. Perhaps you begin to understand, m'sieur. Perhaps you will see more clearly when I tell you—"

"Yes, yes," urged Philip.

"—that this man, the father of the baby, is the Lang who owns Thoreau, who owns that freebooters' den, who owns the string of them from here to the Athabasca, and who lives in Montreal!"

Philip could only stare at Jean, who went on, his face the color of gray ash in the starlight.

"I must tell you the rest. You must understand before the great fight comes. You know—the terrible thing happened in Montreal. And this man Lang—all the passion of hell is in his soul! He is rich. He has power up here, for he owns Thoreau and all his cut-throats. And he is not satisfied with the ruin he worked down there. He has followed Josephine. He is mad with passion—with the desire for her—"

"Good God, don't tell me more of that!" cried Philip. "I understand. He has followed. And Josephine is to be the price of his silence!"

"Yes, just that. He knows what it means up here for such a thing to happen. His love for her is not love. It is the passion that fills hell with its worst. He laid his plans before he came. That letter, the paper I read, m'sieur! He meant to see Josephine at once, and show it to her. There are two of those papers: one at Thoreau's place and one in Thoreau's pocket. If anything happens to Lang, one of them is to be delivered to the Master of Adare by Thoreau. If I had killed him it would have gone to the Master. It is Lang's safeguard. And there are two copies—"

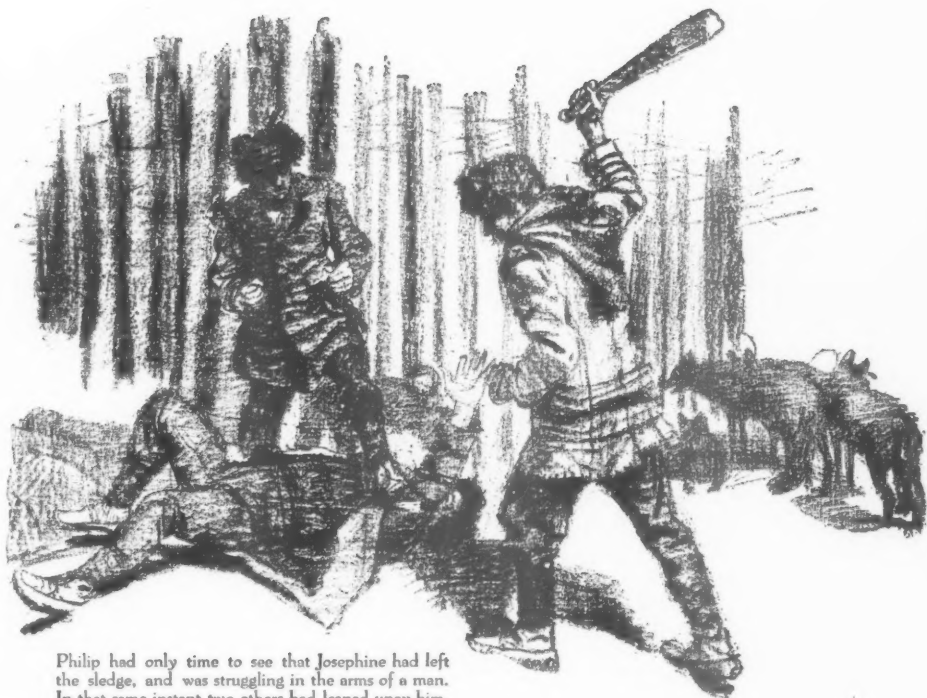
to make the thing sure. So, we cannot kill him.

"Josephine listened to all this to-night, from Lang's own lips. And she pleaded with him, m'sieur. She called upon him to think of the little child, letting him believe that it was still alive; and he laughed at her. And then, almost as I was ready to plunge my knife into his heart, she threw up her head like an angel and told him to do his worst—that she refused to pay the price. I never saw her stronger than in that moment, m'sieur—in that moment when there was no hope! I would have killed him then for the paper he had, but the other is at Thoreau's. He has gone back there. He says that unless he receives word of Josephine's surrender within a week—the crash will come: the paper will be given to the master of Adare. And now,

M'sieur Philip, I have told you all I can of the story; what do you have to say?"

"That there never was a game lost until it was played to the end," replied Philip, and he drew nearer to look straight and steadily into the half-breed's eyes. "But I must beg you to go on, Jean. I feel that there is something more which you have not told me. And that is the biggest thing of all. Go on!"





Philip had only time to see that Josephine had left the sledge, and was struggling in the arms of a man. In that same instant two others had leaped upon him.

FOR a space there was a startled look in Jean's eyes. Then he shrugged his shoulders, and smiled.

"Of course there is more," he said. "You have known that, m'sieur. There is one thing which you will never know—that which Josephine said you would not guess if you lived a thousand years. You must forget that there is more than I have told you, for it will do you no good to remember."

Expectancy died out of Philip's eyes.

"And yet I believe that what you are holding back from me is the key to everything."

"I have told you enough, m'sieur—enough to make you see why we must fight."

"But not how."

"That will come soon," replied Jean, a little troubled.

The men were silent. Behind them they heard the restless movement of the dogs. Out of the gloom came a wailing whine. Again Philip looked at Jean.

"Do you know, your story seems weak in places, Jean," he said. "I believe every word you have said. And yet, when you come to think of it all, the situation doesn't seem to be so terribly alarming to me after all. Why, for instance, do you fear those letters—this scoundrel Lang's confession? Kill him. Let the letter come to Adare. Cannot Josephine swear that she is innocent? Can she not have a story of her own showing how foully Lang has tried to blackmail her into a crime? Would not Adare believe her word before that of a freebooter? And am I not here to swear—that the child—was mine?"

There was almost a pitying look in the half-breed's eyes.

"M'sieur, what if in that letter were named people and places: the hospital itself, the doctors, the record of birth? What if it contained all those many things by which the Master of Adare might trail back easily to the truth? With those things in the letter, would

he not investigate? And then—" He made a despairing gesture.

"I see," said Philip. Then he added, quickly: "But could we not keep the papers from Adare. Jean? Could we not watch for the messenger?"

"They are not fools, m'sieur. Such a thing would be easy—if they sent a messenger with the papers. But they have guarded against that. The Master is to be invited to Thoreau's. The letter will be given to him there."

Philip began pacing back and forth, his head bowed in thought, his hands deep in his pockets.

"They have planned it well—like very devils!" he exclaimed. "And yet—even now I see a flaw. Is Lang's threat merely a threat? Would he, after all, actually have the letter given to Adare? If these letters are his trump cards, why did he try to have him killed? Would not Adare's death rob him of his greatest power?"

"In a way, m'sieur. And yet with the Master gone, both Josephine and Miriam would be still more hopelessly in his clutches. For I know that he had planned to kill me after the Master. My brother had not guessed that. And then the women would be alone. Holy Heaven, I cannot see the end of crime that might come of that! Even though they escaped him to go back to civilization, they would be still more in his power there."

Philip's face was upturned to the stars. He laughed, but there was no mirth in the laugh. And then he faced Jean again, and his eyes were filled with the merciless gleam that came into those of the wolf-beasts back in the pit.

"It is the big fight then, Jean. But, before that, just one question more. All of this trouble might have been saved if Josephine had married Lang. Why didn't she?"

For an instant every muscle in Jean's body became as taut as a bowstring. He hunched a little forward, as if about to leap upon the other, and strike him down. And then, all at once, he relaxed. His hands unclenched. And he answered calmly:

"That is the one story that will never be told, m'sieur. Come! They will won-

der about us at Adare House. Let us return."

Philip fell in behind him. Not until they were close to the door of the house did Jean speak again.

"You are with me, m'sieur—to the death, if it must be?"

"Yes, to the death," replied Philip.

"Then, let no sleep come to your eyes so long as Josephine is awake," went on Jean quickly. "I am going to leave Adare House to-night, m'sieur, with team and sledge. The Master must believe I have gone over to see my sick friend on the Pipestone. I am going there—and farther!" His voice became a low, tense whisper. "You understand, m'sieur? We are preparing."

The two clasped hands.

"I will return late to-morrow, or to-morrow night," resumed Jean. "It may even be the next day. But I shall travel fast—without rest. And during that time you are on guard. In my room you will find an extra rifle and cartridges. Carry it when you go about. And spend as much of your time as you can with the master of Adare. Watch Josephine. I will not see her again to-night. Warn her for me. She must not go alone in the forests—not even to the dog-pit."

"I understand," said Philip.

They entered the house. Twenty minutes later, from the window of his room, Philip saw a dark figure walking swiftly back toward the forest. Still later he heard the distant wail of a husky coming from the direction of the pit, and he knew that the first gun in the big fight had been fired—that Jean Jacques Croisset was off on his thrilling mission into the depths of the forests. What that mission was he had not asked him. But he had guessed. And his blood ran warm with a strange excitement.

CHAPTER XXI

AGAIN there filled Philip the desire to be with Jean in the forest. The husky's wail told him that the half-breed had begun his journey. Between this hour and to-morrow night he would be threading his way swiftly over the wilderness trails on his strange mission. Philip envied him the action, the ex-

haustion that would follow. He envied even the dogs running in the traces. He was a living dynamo, overcharged, with every nerve in him drawn to the point that demanded the reaction of physical exertion. He knew that he could not sleep. The night would be one long and tedious wait for the dawn. And Jean had told him not to sleep as long as Josephine was awake!

Was he to take that literally? Did Jean mean that he was to watch her? He wondered if she was in bed now. At least the half-breed's admonition offered him an excuse. He would go to her room. If there was a light he would knock, and ask her if she would join him in the piano-room. He looked at his watch. It was nearly midnight. Probably she had retired.

He opened his door and entered the hall. Quietly he went to the end room. There was no light—and he heard no sound. He was standing close to it, concealed in the shadows, when his heart gave a sudden jump. Advancing toward him down the hall was a figure clad in a flowing white night-robe.

At first he did not know whether it was Josephine or Miriam. And then, as she came under one of the low-burning lamps, he saw that it was Miriam. She had turned, and was looking back toward the room where she had left her husband. Her beautiful hair was loose, and fell in lustrous masses to her hips. She was listening. And in that moment Philip heard a low, passionate sob. She turned her face toward him again, and he could see it drawn with agony. In the lamp-glow her hands were clasped at her partly bared breast. She was barefoot, and made no sound as she advanced. Philip drew himself back closer against the wall. He was sure she had not seen him. A moment later Miriam turned into the corridor that led into Adare's big room.

Philip felt that he was trembling. In Miriam's face he had seen something that had made his heart beat faster. Quietly he went to the corridor, turned, and made his way cautiously to the door of Adare's room. It was dark inside; the corridor was black. Hidden in the gloom he listened. He heard Miriam sink in

one of the big chairs, and from her movement, and the sound of her sobbing, he knew that she had buried her head in her arms on the table. He listened for minutes to the grief that seemed racking her soul. Then there was silence. A moment later he heard her, and she was so close to the door that he dared not move. She passed him, and turned into the main hall. He followed her again.

She paused only for an instant at the door of the room in which she and her husband slept. Then she passed on; and scarcely believing his eyes, Philip saw her open the door that led outside.

She was now full in the glow of the lamp that hung over the door, and Philip saw her plainly. A biting gust of wind flung back her hair. He saw her bare arms; she turned, and he caught the white gleam of a naked shoulder. Before he could speak—before he could call her name, she had darted out into the night!

With a gasp of amazement he sprang after her. Her bare feet were deep in the snow when he caught her. A frightened cry broke from her lips. He picked her up in his arms as if she had been a child, and ran back into the hall with her, closing the door after them. Panting, shivering with the cold, she stared at him without speaking.

"Why, were you going out there?" he whispered. "Why—like that?"

For a moment he was afraid that from her heaving bosom and quivering lips would burst forth the strange excitement which she was fighting back. Something told him that the master of Adare House must not discover them in the hall. He caught her hands. They were cold as ice.

"Go to your room," he whispered gently. "You must not let him know you were out there in the snow—like this. You—were partly asleep."

Purposely he gave her the chance to seize upon this explanation. The sobbing breath came to her lips again.

"I guess—it must have been—that," she said, drawing her hands from him. "I was going out—to—the baby. Thank you, Philip. I—I will go to my room now."

SHE left him, and not until her door had shut behind her did he stir. Had she spoken the truth? Had she in those few moments been temporarily irresponsible because of grieving over the baby's death? Some inner consciousness answered him in the negative. It was not that. And yet—what more could there be? He remembered Jean's words, his insistent warnings. Resolutely he moved toward Josephine's room, and knocked softly upon her door. He was surprised at the promptness with which her voice answered. When he spoke his name, and told her it was important for him to see her, she opened the door. She had unbound her hair. But she was still dressed, and Philip knew that she had been sitting alone in the darkness of her room.

She looked at him strangely and expectantly. It seemed to Philip as if she had been waiting for news which she dreaded, and which she feared that he was bringing her.

"May I come in?" he whispered. "Or would you prefer to go into the other room?"

"You may come in, Philip," she replied, letting him take her hand. "I am still dressed. I have been so dreadfully nervous to-night that I haven't thought of going to bed. And the moon is so beautiful through my window. It has been company." Then she asked: "What have you to tell me, Philip?"

She had stepped into the light that flooded through the window. It transformed her hair into a lustrous mantle of deep gold; into her eyes it put the warm glow of the stars. He made a movement, as if to put his arms about her, but he caught himself, and a little joyous breath came to Josephine's lips. It was her room, where she slept—and he had come at a strange hour. She understood the movement, his desire to take her in his arms, and his big, clean thoughts of her as he drew a step back. It sent a flush of pleasure and still deeper trust into her cheeks.

"You have something to tell me?" she asked.

"Yes—about your mother."

Her hand had touched his arm, and he felt her start. Briefly he told what

had happened. When he had finished, Josephine's face was so white that it startled him.

"She said—she was going to the baby!" she breathed, as if whispering the words to herself. "And she was in her bare feet, with her hair down, and her gown open to the snow and wind! Oh, my God!"

"Perhaps she was in her sleep," Philip hastened to suggest. "It might have been that, Josephine."

"No, she wasn't in her sleep," replied Josephine, meeting his eyes. "You know that, Philip. She was awake. And you have come to tell me, so that I may watch her. I understand."

"She might rest easier with you—if you can arrange it," he agreed. "Your father worries over her now. It will not do to let him know this."

She nodded.

"I will bring her to my room, Philip. I will tell my father that I am nervous and cannot sleep. And I will say nothing to her of what has happened. I will go as soon as you have returned to your room."

He went to the door, and there for a moment she stood close to him, gazing up into his face. Still he did not put his hands to her. To-night—in her own room—it seemed to him something like sacrilege to touch her. And then, suddenly, she raised her two arms up through her shimmering hair to his shoulders, and held her lips to him.

"Good-night, Philip!"

He caught her to him. Her arms tightened about his shoulders. For a moment he felt the thrill of her warm lips. Then she drew back, whispering again:

"Good-night, Philip!"

The door closed softly, and he returned to his room. Again the song of life, of love, of hope that pictured but one glorious end filled his soul to overflowing. A little later and he knew that Adare's wife had gone with Josephine to her room. He went to bed. And sleep came to him now, filled with dreams in which he lived with Josephine always at his side, laughing and singing with him, and giving him her lips to kiss in their joyous paradise.

CHAPTER XXII

BUT from these dreams he was awakened by a sound that had slowly and persistently become a part of his mental consciousness. It was *tap, tap, tap* at his window. At last he sat up, and listened. It was in the gray gloom of dawn. Again the sound was repeated: *tap, tap, tap*, on the pane of glass.

He slipped out of bed, his hand seeking the automatic under his pillow. He had slept with the window partly open. Covering it with his pistol, he called, "Who is there?"

"A runner from Jean Croisset," came back a cautious voice. "I have a written message for you, m'sieur."

He saw an arm thrust through the window, in the hand a bit of paper. He advanced cautiously until he could see the face that was peering in. It was a thin, dark, fur-hooded face, with eyes black and narrow like Jean's, a half-breed. He seized the paper, and still watching the face and arm, lighted a lamp. Not until he had read the note did his suspicion leave him.

This is Pierre Langlois, my friend of the Pipestone. If anything should happen that you need me quickly let him come after me. You may trust him. He will put up his tepee in the thick timber close to the dog-pit. We have fought together. *L'Ange* saved his wife from the smallpox. I am going westward.

JEAN.

Philip sprang back to the window and gripped the mittened hand that still hung over the sill.

"I'm glad to know you, Pierre. Is there no other word from Jean?"

"Only the note, *Ookimov*."

"You just came?"

"Aha. My dogs and sledge are back in the forest."

"Listen!" Philip turned toward the door. In the hall he heard footsteps. "*Le M'sieur* is awake," he said quickly to Pierre. "I will see you in the forest!"

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when the half-breed was gone. A moment later Philip knew that it was Adare who had passed his door. He dressed and shaved himself before he

left his room. He found Adare in his study. Metoosin already had a fire burning, and Adare was standing before this alone, when Philip entered. Something was lacking in Adare's greeting this morning. There was an uneasy, searching look in his eyes as he looked at Philip. They shook hands, and his hand was heavy and lifeless. His shoulders seemed to droop a little more, and his voice was unnatural when he spoke.

"You did not go to bed until quite late last night, Philip?"

"Yes, it was late, *mon père*."

For a moment Adare was silent, his head bowed, his eyes on the floor. He did not raise his gaze when he spoke again.

"Did you hear anything—late—about midnight?" he asked. He straightened, and looked steadily into Philip's eyes. "Did you see Miriam?"

For an instant Philip felt that it was useless to attempt concealment under the searching scrutiny of the older man's eyes. Like an inspiration came to him a thought of Josephine.

"Josephine was the last person I saw after leaving you," he said truthfully. "And she was in her room before eleven."

"It is strange, unaccountable," mused Adare. "Miriam left her bed last night while I was asleep. It must have been about midnight, for it is then that the moon shines full into our window. In returning she awakened me. And her hair was damp; there was snow on her gown! My God, she had been out-doors, almost naked! She said that she must have walked in her sleep, that she had awakened to find herself in the open door with the wind and snow beating upon her. This is the first time. I never knew her to do it before. It disturbs me."

"She is sleeping now?"

"I don't know. Josephine came a little later and said that she could not sleep. Miriam went with her."

"It must have been the baby," comforted Philip, placing a hand on Adare's arm. "We can stand it, *mon père*. We are men. With them it is different. We must bear up under our grief. It is necessary for us to have strength for them as well as ourselves."

"Do you think it is that?" cried Adare with sudden eagerness. "If it is, I am ashamed of myself, Philip! I have been brooding too much over the strange change in Miriam. But I see now. It must have been the baby. It has been a tremendous strain. I have heard her crying when she did not know that I heard. I am ashamed of myself. And the blow has been hardest on you!"

"And Josephine," added Philip.

John Adare had thrown back his shoulders, and with a deep feeling of relief Philip saw the old light in his eyes.

"We must cheer them up," he added quickly. "I will ask Josephine if they will join us at breakfast, *mon père*."

He closed the door behind him when he left the room, and he went at once to rouse Josephine—if she was still in bed. He was agreeably surprised to find that both Miriam and Josephine were up and dressing. With this news he returned to Adare.

THREE-QUARTERS of an hour later they met in the breakfast room. A glance told him that Josephine was making a last heroic fight. She had dressed her hair in shining coils low over her neck and cheeks this morning, in an effort to hide her pallor. Miriam seemed greatly changed from the preceding night. Her eyes were clearer. A careful toilette had taken away the dark circles from under them, and had added a touch of color to her lips and cheeks. She went to Adare when the two men entered, and with a joyous rumble of approval the giant held her off at arm's length and looked at her.

"It didn't do you any harm after all," Philip heard him say. "Did you tell Mignonnette of your adventure, *ma chérie*?"

Philip did not hear Miriam's reply, for he was looking down into Josephine's face. Her lips were smiling. She made no effort to conceal the gladness in her eyes as he bent and kissed her.

"It was a hard night, dear."

"Terrible," she whispered. "Mother told me what happened. She is stronger this morning. We must keep the truth from him."

"The truth?"

He felt her start.

"Hush!" she breathed. "You know—you understand what I mean. Let us sit down to breakfast now."

During the hour that followed, Philip was amazed at Miriam. She laughed and talked as she had not done before. The bit of artificial color she had given to her cheeks and lips faded under the brighter flush that came into her face. He could see that Josephine was nearly as surprised as himself. John Adare was fairly boyish in his delight. The meal was finished, and Philip and Adare were about to light their cigars when a commotion outside drew them all to the window that overlooked one side of the clearing. Out of the forest had come two dog-teams, their drivers shouting and cracking their long caribou-gut whips. Philip stared, conscious that Josephine's hand was clutching his arm. Neither of the shouting men was Jean.

"An Indian, and Renault the quarter-blood," grunted Adare. "Wonder what they want here in November. They should be on their trap-lines."

"Perhaps, *mon père*, they have come to see their friends," suggested Josephine. "You know, it has been a long time since some of them have seen us. I would be disappointed if our people didn't show they were glad because of your home-coming!"

"Of course that's it!" cried Adare. "Ho, Metoosin!" he roared, turning toward the door. "Meetoosin! *Pai-too ta! H'awep isewin!*"

Metoosin appeared at the door.

"Build a great fire in the *una kah* house," commanded Adare. "Feed all who come in from the forests, Metoosin. Open up tobacco, and preserves, and flour and bacon. Nothing in the storehouse is too good for them. And send Jean to me! Where is he?"

"*Numma tao, ookimow.*"

"Gone!" exclaimed Adare.

"He didn't want to disturb you last night," explained Philip. "He made an early start for the Pipestone."

"If he was an ordinary man I'd say he was in love with one of the Langlois girls," said Adare, with a shrug of his shoulders. "*Neah*, Metoosin! Make them

comfortable, and we will all see them later." As Metoosin went, Adare turned upon the others. "Shall we all go out now?" he asked.

"Splendid!" accepted Josephine eagerly. "Come, *Mikawe*. We can be ready in a moment!"

She ran from the room, leading her mother by the hand. Philip and Adare followed them, and shortly the four were ready to leave the house. The *unakah*, or guest house, was in the edge of the timber. It was a long, low building of logs, and was always open with its accommodations to the Indians and half-breeds—men, women and children—who came in from the forest trails. Renault and the Indian were helping Metoosin build fires when they entered. Philip thought that Renault's eyes rested upon him in a curious and searching glance even as Adare shook hands with him. He was more interested in the low words both the Indian and the blood muttered as they stood for a moment with bowed heads before Josephine and Miriam. Then Renault raised his head, and spoke direct to Josephine.

"I breeng word for heem of Jan Breuil an' *wewimow* over on Jac' fish, *ma Kichi Utooskayakun*," he said in a low voice. "Heem lee'l girl so seek she goin' die."

"Little Marie? She is sick—dying, you say?" cried Josephine.

"Aha. She ver' dam' seek. She burn up lak fire."

Josephine looked up at Philip.

"I knew she was sick," she said. "But I didn't think it was so bad. If she dies it will be my fault. I should have gone." She turned quickly to Renault. "When did you see her last?" she asked. "Listen! *Papak-oo-moo?*"

"Aha."

"It is a sickness the children have each winter," she explained, looking questioningly into Philip's eyes again. "It kills quickly when left alone. But I have medicine that will cure it. There is still time. We must go, Philip. We must!"

Her face had paled a little. She saw the gathering lines in Philip's forehead. He thought of Jean's words—the warning they carried. She pressed his arm, and her mouth was firm.

"I am going, Philip," she said softly. "Will you go with me?"

"I will, if you must go," he said. "But it is not best."

"It is best for little Marie," she retorted, and left him to tell Adare and her mother of Renault's message.

Renault stepped close to Philip. His back was to the others. He spoke in a low voice.

"I breeng good word from Jean Croiset, m'sieur. Heem say Soomin Renault good man lak Pierre Langlois, an' he fight lak devil when ask. I breeng Indian an' two team. We be in forest near dog *watekan*, where Pierre mak his fire an' tepee. You understand? Aha?"

"Yes — I understand," whispered Philip. "And Jean has gone on—to see others?"

"He go lak win' to François over on Waterfound. François come in wan hour—two, t'ree, mebbey."

Josephine and Adare approached.

"Mignonne is turning nurse again," rumbled Adare, one of his great arms thrown affectionately about her waist. "You'll have a jolly run on a clear morning like this, Philip. But remember, if it is the smallpox I forbid her to expose herself!"

"I shall see to that, *mon père*. When do we start, Josephine?"

"As soon as I can get ready and Metoosin brings the dogs," replied Josephine. "I am going to the house now. Will you come with me?"

IT was an hour before Metoosin had brought the dogs from the pit and they were ready to start. Philip had armed himself with a rifle and his automatic, and Josephine had packed both medicine and food in a large basket. The new snow was soft, and Metoosin had brought a toboggan instead of a sledge with runners. In the traces were Captain and five of his team-mates.

"Isn't the pack going with us?" asked Philip.

"I never take them when there is very bad sickness, like this," explained Josephine. "There is something about the nearness of death that makes them howl. I haven't been able to train that out of them."

Philip was disappointed, but he said nothing more. He tucked Josephine among the furs, cracked the long whip Metoosin had given him, and they were off, with Miriam and her husband waving their hands from the door of Adare House. They had scarcely passed out of view in the forest when with a sudden sharp command Josephine stopped the dogs. She sprang out of her furs and stood laughingly beside Philip.

"Father always insists that I ride. He says it's not good for a woman to run," she said. "But I do. I love to run. There!"

As she spoke she had thrown her outer coat on the sledge, and stood before him, straight and slim. Her hair was in a long braid.

"Now, are you ready?" she challenged.

"Good Lord, have mercy on me!" gasped Philip. "You look as if you might fly, Josephine!"

Her signal to the dogs was so low he scarcely heard it, and they sped along the white and narrow trail into which Josephine had directed them. Philip fell in behind her. It had always roused a certain sense of humor in him to see a woman run. But in Josephine he saw now the swiftness and lithesome grace of a fawn. Her head was thrown back; her mittened hands were drawn up to her breast as the running forest man holds his; and her shining braid danced and rippled in the early sun with each quick step she took.

Ahead of her the gray and yellow backs of the dogs rose and fell with a rhythmic movement that was almost music. Their ears aslant, their crests bristling, their bushy tails curling like plumes over their hips, they responded with almost automatic precision to the low words that fell from the lips of the girl behind them.

With each minute that passed Philip wondered how much longer Josephine could keep up the pace. They had run fully a mile and his own breath was growing shorter when the toe of his moccasined foot caught under a bit of brushwood and he plunged head foremost into the snow. When he had brushed the snow out of his eyes and ears Josephine was

standing over him, laughing. The dogs were squatted on their haunches, looking back.

"My poor Philip!" she laughed, offering him an assisting hand. "We almost lost you, didn't we? It was Captain who missed you first, and he almost toppled me over the sled!"

Her face was radiant. Lips, eyes and cheeks were glowing. Her breast rose and fell quickly.

"It was your fault!" he accused her. "I couldn't keep my eyes off you, and never thought of my feet. I shall have my revenge—here!"

He drew her into his arms, protesting. Not until he had kissed her parted, half-smiling lips did he release her.

"I'm going to ride now," she declared. "I'm not going to run the danger of being accused again."

He wrapped her again in the furs on the toboggan. It was eight miles to Jac Breuil's, and they reached his cabin in two hours. Breuil was not much more than a boy, scarcely older than the dark-eyed little half French girl who was his wife, and their eyes were big with terror. With a thrill of wonder and pleasure Philip observed the swift change in them as Josephine sprang from the toboggan. Breuil was almost sobbing as he whispered to Philip:

"Oh, ze sweet *ange*, m'sieur! She cam jus' in time!"

Josephine was bending over little Marie's cot when they followed her and the girl mother into the cabin. In a moment she looked up with a glad smile.

"It is the same sickness, Marie," she said to the mother. "I have medicine here that will cure it. The fever isn't as bad as I thought it would be."

Noon saw a big change in the cabin. Little Marie's temperature was falling rapidly. Breuil and his wife were happy. After dinner Josephine explained again how they were to give the medicine she was leaving, and at two o'clock they left on their return journey to Adare House. The sun had disappeared hours before. Gray banks of cloud filled the sky, and it had grown much colder.

"We will reach home only a little before dark," said Philip. "You had better ride, Josephine."

He was eager to reach Adare House. By this time he felt that Jean should have returned, and he was confident that in the forest near the pit, there were others of the forest people besides Pierre, Renault and the Indian. For an hour he kept up a swift pace. Later they came to a dense cover of black spruce two miles from Adare House. They had traversed a part of this when the dogs stopped. Directly ahead had fallen a dead cedar, barring the trail. Philip went to the toboggan for the trail ax.

"I haven't noticed any wind, have you?" he asked. "Not enough to topple over a cedar."

He went to the tree and began cutting. Scarcely had his axe fallen half a dozen times when a scream of terror turned him about like a flash. He had only time to see that Josephine had left the sledge, and was struggling in the arms of a man. In that same instant two others had leaped upon him. He had not time to strike, to lift his ax. He went down, a pair of hands gripping at his throat. He saw a face over him, and he knew now that it was the face of the man he had seen in the firelight, the face of Lang, the free trader. Every atom of strength in him rose in a superhuman effort to throw off his assailants. Then came the blow. He saw the club over him, a short, thick club, in the hand of Thoreau himself. After that followed darkness and oblivion, punctuated by the *crack, crack, crack* of a revolver and the howling of dogs—sounds that grew fainter until they died away altogether, and he sank into the stillness of night.

IT was almost dark when consciousness stirred Philip again. With an effort he pulled himself to his knees, and stared about him. Josephine was gone; the dogs were gone. He staggered to his feet, a moaning cry on his lips. He saw the sledge. Still in the traces lay the bodies of two of the dogs, and he knew what the pistol shots had meant. The others had been cut loose. Straight out into the forest led the trails of several men; and the meaning of it all, the reality of what had happened, surged

upon him in all its horror. Lang and his cut-throats had carried off Josephine. He knew by the thickening darkness that they had time to get a good start on their way to Thoreau's.

One thought filled his dizzy brain now. He must reach Jean and the camp near the pit. He staggered as he turned his face homeward. At times the trail seemed to reach up and strike him in the face. There was a blinding pain back of his eyes. A dozen times in the first mile he fell, and each time it was harder for him to regain his feet. The darkness of night grew heavier about him, and now and then he found himself crawling on his hands and knees. It was two hours before his dazed senses caught the glow of a fire ahead of him. Even then it seemed an age before he reached it. And when at last he staggered into the circle of light he saw half a dozen startled faces, and he heard the strange cry of Jean Jacques Croisset as he sprang up and caught Philip in his arms. Philip's strength was gone, but before he crumpled down into the snow he still had time to tell Jean what had happened.

And then he heard a voice, Jean's voice, crying fierce commands to the men about the fire; he heard excited replies, the hurry of feet, the barking of dogs. Something warm and comforting touched his lips. He struggled to bring himself back into life. He seemed to have been fighting hours before he opened his eyes. He pulled himself up, stared into the dark, livid face of Jean, the half-breed.

"The hour—has come—" he murmured.

"Yes, the hour has come, m'sieur!" cried Jean. "The swiftest teams and the swiftest runners in this part of the Northland are on the trail, and by morning the forest people will be roused from here to the Waterfound, from the Cree camp on Lobstick to the Gray Loon waterway! Drink this, m'sieur. There is no time to lose. For it is Jean Jacques Croisset who tells you that not a wolf will howl this night that does not call forth the signal to those who love our Josephine! Drink!"

The story of the big fight will be in the final installment of "God's Country—and the Woman," in the January Red Book, on the news-stands December 23rd.

The Little House in the Dark

WHEREIN a man and a woman find light in a great darkness and win happiness from despair.

By John Barton Oxford

Author of "Wages," "Spice," etc.

FOOTSTEPS pattered on the stairs. The front door opened and closed. A slim figure in gray, the face covered with a heavy veil, moved slowly down the path between the two rows of yellowing box. The latch of the high, old-fashioned gate clicked loudly, and the gray figure went down the quiet, elm-lined street in the gathering September dusk.

Miss Cornelia Bascom turned from the wide front window where she had been watching.

"I don't like it," she said flatly to her sister, Miss Emily. "I don't like it at all."

"It's pride—just pride. It's happened; it can't be helped. She'll have to make the best of it," said Miss Emily.

She was sitting before the hearth on which a little fire of shingles cracked and snapped. Miss Emily was somewhat older than her sister. Also her face was rather sharper and her mouth very much more thin-lipped and unyielding.

Miss Cornelia—you knew that once, long ago, Miss Cornelia must have been more than passably pretty—sighed. Her own face hardened a little as she looked at her sister, sitting there before the fire.

"Oh, Emily, how can you talk that way!" she disagreed. "It's not wholly pride. It's—it's having everything changed so for her; it's sensing the pity everybody will have for her now. Suppose you had been as pretty as she—"

"Humph!" interrupted Miss Emily, pushing her slippered feet nearer the fire.

Miss Cornelia ignored the displeasure in those tones.

"Suppose you had been as pretty as she," she repeated firmly, "and had been in an accident of that sort, and come out of it with that frightful scar on your face—a scar that changed you from the prettiest girl for miles around to—what she is now. Think how you'd have felt."

"Humph!" Miss Emily grunted again.

She picked up a brass poker and prodded the pile of blazing shingles on the old andirons.

"Well, if I had, I should make the best of it," said she. "In the first place, I wouldn't have been riding with Frank Murchie in that car of his. It was a foregone conclusion he was coming to grief sooner or later, the reckless way he drove it. But, if I had been with him, if I had been smashed up, if I'd got off with nothing worse than a scar on my face, I should have thanked my lucky stars."

She gave the shingles an impatient prod.

"It's a mercy she wasn't killed outright," said she.

"I don't know as it was a mercy," said Miss Cornelia slowly. "If she's going to take it this way—if she's going to keep aloof from everybody, I think—almost—sometimes—"

Miss Emily turned to glare at her.

"Stuff and nonsense!" she snapped. "She'll get over it. She's got to get over it. Time adjusts everything. She'll realize eventually that she's lucky to be alive, even if her face—I'll admit it was an unusually pretty face, Cornelia—is disfigured for life."

"She's the sort of girl who should have

a lot of young men about her," said Miss Cornelia. "Now—"

"Now she wont," said her sister grimly. "She's got to realize that. There are lots of things in life much more worth while than a lot of sentimental young idiots dancing attendance to you."

MISS CORNELIA opened her lips as if to speak; then she thought better of it and remained silent. But whatever it was that she had left unsaid had touched her cheeks with a soft color. She stepped back to the front window and stood looking out at the many lights just beginning to glow in the darkness. Miss Emily, although the evening was not over chilly for that time of the year, stooped to put more shingles on the and-irons.

"I wouldn't worry too much about her," she said to her sister. "As I say, there's bound to be a period of re-adjustment for her in light of what has happened. I think myself she's taking it very sensibly—much more sensibly than I ever thought she would, with her temperament."

"She might be eating her heart out about it," said Miss Cornelia from the window. "She'd never let us know if she was. I don't like it, Emily—the way she refuses to see any of the young men who were forever coming here before it happened. Do you notice she never goes out except when it's getting dark, and that she always goes alone?"

"She's bound to feel that way for a time," said the older woman by the fire. "I'll grant you it's mighty hard for her, Cornelia; but with time things will adjust themselves."

"It's been three months already."

"Be patient, Cornelia," Miss Emily advised. "She has a lot of pride—too much pride. She doesn't get it from the Bascoms, goodness knows. *We* were never over proud, any of us. That comes from her father, as her temperament comes from him. Are there any of the shingles left in the shed? Well, wont you tell Mary to bring in another armful."

Miss Cornelia moved towards the door, but with her hand on the knob she paused.

"I can't bear to have her unhappy and facing what I'm afraid she's facing," she said. "She's our only near kin in the world, Emily—our own sister's child. She's come to mean a great deal to me since she's lived here with us after Edith died. She was so pretty and so happy and so full of life, before. What on earth did she ever do to deserve anything like this?"

"That isn't for us to question or to judge, I presume," said Miss Emily. "But it does seem rather hard that the one disfiguring cut she got in that smash should be on her face. I'm afraid there'll be one more spinster in the family."

AT the end of the elm-lined street Barbara Ropes turned her steps towards the river. Little, pin-point stars poked one by one out of the cloudless September sky. Darker, heavier shadows gathered beneath the trees. Across the river the last faint afterglow in the west was dying out.

For the past three months she had shown a smiling face to her two aunts back at the old Bascom place—the same smiling face she had always shown them. She alone knew what it had cost her. She alone knew the shrinking dread that possessed her as, with the door of her room locked, she stood before her mirror looking at that vivid scar running across her right cheek—the scar which pulled down one corner of her right eye and drew up horribly the right corner of her mouth.

None of the old, gay, carefree crowd who had been wont to haunt the Bascom place since her coming there should ever see her like this. Pity was the one thing she felt she could not stand. And she knew the pity there would be in their eyes when they looked on her as she was now. She had made up her mind to that the day Aunt Emily had propped her up in bed, and with averted face, had handed her the mirror she had asked for.

Life, she realized now, would mean something different than she had pictured it in the old days. Just what it would mean to her she had not as yet decided. She was groping blindly at present, in the dark. What her course would be, would doubtless come to her in time. Meantime she held aloof and waited,

with the horrible loneliness growing upon her day by day.

She turned into the road that led along the bluffs on the river. The last gray light had faded in the west. The sky was sprinkled thick with stars. Black water, golden-studded with the reflection of the heavens, lay at the base of the bluffs below her.

She walked on aimlessly until a rustic fence blocked her way. In the fence, close at hand, was a little turnstile. Beyond it were towering pines.

Faintly, barely discernible through the gloom she could make out the lines of a low, rambling house. It was, she knew, the newest of the summer places with which the river bluffs were studded. It seemed very quiet and restful, nestling there beneath the pines. Barbara passed through the little turnstile. The fancy struck her to see the house at closer range.

She had traversed, perhaps, half the distance from the turnstile to the house, when she heard the sound of a piano and a voice singing softly through the night. She stopped, a faint gray shadow beneath one of the looming pines, to listen. It was a man's voice singing—not a remarkable voice in any way, just a firm, clear voice, coming pleasantly through the pines.

BARBARA crept noiselessly nearer that she might hear the better. A broad veranda surrounded the house, and opening onto it were many long French windows. It was through one of these that the singing came. And even as the girl tiptoed softly up the wide veranda steps the singer began an old, old favorite of hers. She leaned against one of the veranda posts, listening. It brought back poignantly other evenings in the front room of the Bascom place—evenings when the place had been alive with music and laughter and gay young voices. The effect was heightened by the faint, haunting fragrance of tobacco smoke. The girl clutched hard at the veranda rail.

That she was an unwarranted intruder did not at that moment cross her mind. All she knew was that she was breathing greedily that smell of smoke, and listening hungrily to the unseen singer

in the rambling little house. The combined effect bridged backward the chasm of these last bitter months. She had lifted her veil. Her eyes were shining softly in the cool darkness.

The sun has kissed the violet sea
And burned the violet to a rose.
Ah, Sea, would'st thou not better be
Mere violet still? Who knows? Who
knows?

Well hides the violet in the wood,
The dead leaf wrinkles her a hood,
And Winter's ill is violet's good.
But the bold glory of the rose,
It quickly comes and quickly goes;
Red petals, whirling in white snows—

The singer was plainly not familiar with the music of the latter part of the song. At any rate, he hesitated a moment and then sang it incorrectly, an improvisation on his own part, evidently.

Barbara had protested before she was aware of it.

"No, oh, no! Not like that," she said.

Then, with burning cheeks, she would have fled. But a quiet voice held her there.

"You know it?" said the voice. "I'd be very grateful if you'd sing it to me as it should go. I've been improvising that end right along. It doesn't sound right, does it? Will you please sing it for me? The piano is right here by the window? I'll sit down in a far corner and be very quiet."

He hadn't asked her who she was, nor why she was there. Indeed, he had spoken as if she had been sitting there in the room all the while. She heard some one walking across the floor within. A chair was pulled forward.

"You haven't gone, have you? I haven't frightened you away?" asked the voice anxiously. "I'm in my far corner, waiting. I'm very fond of that particular song, and I'd like to sing it correctly in the future. Am I asking too much?"

The voice was very likable, with just a touch of melancholy in it. Barbara's cheeks were burning. One step she took towards the veranda steps. Then again that haunting fragrance of tobacco smoke drifted out to her. She turned about abruptly. She was at the window. The piano was close at hand. Dimly she could just see the outline of one corner.

Beyond, the room was in utter darkness.

And then with her cheeks still burning and her heart pounding furiously she was sitting at the piano, singing in that low voice of hers.

"That is the way it should go," she said as she finished.

"Thank you," said he. "Wont you sing the rest of it for me?"

She struck the keys again. Outside, the faint sighing of the wind in the pines and the murmur of the current at the base of the bluff came to them whisperingly.

Barbara sang, as she had never sung before.

The sun has burned the rose-red sea;
The rose has turned to ashes gray.
O sea, O sea, might'st thou but be
The violet thou hast been to-day.
The sun is brave, the sun is bright;
The sun is lord of love and light;
But after him it cometh night,
Dim anguish of the lonesome dark—

There was something like a sigh from the far corner of the room. Barbara sang on to the end.

"Thank you," the man said simply again as she finished. "You have a beautiful voice."

Barbara, frightened at the lengths to which her loneliness had carried her, had stepped through the window to the veranda. The man had not moved—she was sure of that—from his chair at the other side of the room.

"Will you come again and sing to me?" he asked.

Distinctly he could hear her catch her breath.

"Like this—unknown—in the dark, just a spirit out of the night. I am very lonely sometimes," he added.

"Yes," said the girl. "Yes—like this—in the dark—just—just—a voice out of the night. If I may come like that—"

"Come like that, please," he urged.

SHE could hear the pounding of her heart as she ran through the pines to the turnstile. But a strange happiness possessed her. She knew it was no real happiness, just a transitory, vicarious thing, but she clutched at it as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

A turnstile in a rustic fence is sup-

posedly a soulless, insensient thing. To Barbara Ropes the turnstile of that place on the bluffs became a living, sympathetic entity. Its strident squeakings as she turned it about, on many following nights, whispered to her of peace and happiness and love and life. Not that she did not know that all these things were intangible, unreal, ephemeral; rather that in her bitterness and loneliness and proud isolation even this poor makeshift was better than nothing.

They sang together in that dark little house; they talked together; they laughed together. The spirit of romance and of adventure was upon them both. Always he sat in his far corner; always she was close to the French window, perching there on the edge of her chair as if contemplating momentary flight.

She learned his name was Vance Rossman, that he was one of the powerful Rossman family whose summer homes were farther up the river. He never asked her name, nor did she ever give it to him, lest knowing who she was, and seeing her sometime by chance in the daylight, might spoil it all. She felt, instinctively, that he regarded her as very beautiful—as beautiful as indeed she had been four months ago. She wanted him to think of her in that way—while this little affair, this poor romance in the dark, should last.

AT the Bascome place Miss Emily bobbed her head sagely to Miss Cornelia.

"What did I tell you?" said she. "Barbara is finding herself; the adjustment is coming. She is beginning to look happy."

"Something has come over the child," said Miss Cornelia, with her own mental reservations in the matter. "I hope it's as you say, Emily."

October came. The nights grew frosty. The long French windows were closed now. But still the little human turnstile squeaked its welcome each night, rain or shine, to the little gray shadow that slipped through it.

Within the dark little room fires burned all day on the hearth, but at night they died to a bed of coals, and even a heavy screen was placed in front

of the dying embers each night before she came. Barbara had never had to request this. The first night the embers glowed on the hearth the screen kept the room in darkness. And each night afterwards it was the same.

It was his tacit granting of a wish she had never found it necessary to voice. Twice, as, heavily veiled, she passed the house on the bluffs in the daytime, she saw him plainly. Both times he sat on the veranda, apparently asleep in his chair. He was a big young man with fine, regular features—the typical Rossman features—huge shoulders and thick brown hair. In fact, he was just the sort of man one would have expected the possessor of such a voice as his to have been.

BARBARA opened the window that October night and stepped inside. The screen was in front of the embers on the hearth; a frosty night wind howled and sucked at the chimney.

Without a word, as was often her wont, she settled herself at the piano and began to play. The man on the other side of the room said no word until she had finished. Then he said simply:

"Sing, please—that thing you sang the first night."

She sang it wonderfully. The last notes died away. Only the wind at the chimney broke the stillness of the room.

"'Dim anguish of the lonesome dark,'" he quoted musingly at length. "Do you like the dark?"

She thought she knew what was coming. She began to tremble. This, then, was the end.

"Yes," said she. "I want it dark—always dark. I wish there was never any light."

"Then you wouldn't be afraid of the dark?" he said very gently.

"Afraid of the dark? Why, I tell you I want it always dark. I want it—"

"I must go away next week," said he, "and without you—"

There was no mistaking the trend of his words. She interrupted them with a little choking cry.

"No!" said she, forestalling him.

"No?" he repeated. "Can I have been wrong? Are all my surmises so far astray? I was sure—"

She had thrown off her hat and veil. She jumped from her chair. In the stillness of the room her fumbling fingers sounded overloudly. A match rasped. In its flickering light she could see a center-table with a wide-shaded lamp on it. In a moment it was aglow. It filled the room with a soft light. It touched the rows upon rows of books in their shelves, the masks and swords and ancient fire-arms on the wall.

The man sat with his back to her, his feet stretched out towards the dying fire behind the heavy screen. He did not turn.

She was breathing hard; her hands clutched the table edge. It was only with a great effort that she held her voice steady.

"I knew it would come sometime; I have been sure of it from the first. It's all been too good, too beautiful to last. Look at me!"

He neither moved nor answered her.

"Look at me!" she repeated fiercely.

"My dear! Oh, my dear!" he chided her gently.

Slowly he got out of the chair. She saw his fingers groping for the side of the room. Then he turned and faced her, his eyes fixed seemingly somewhere beyond her, beyond everything. He took a step towards her, bumped against the table and felt his way along its edge. And then she knew he was blind.

MISS CORNELIA came running downstairs next morning fairly bursting with excitement.

"You and your re-adjustments!" she said with happy scorn, embracing her sister boisterously. "It wasn't anything of the sort. Barbara is going to marry Vance Rossman."

"Vance Rossman!" gasped Miss Emily. "Why, he's stone—"

She checked herself suddenly.

"The Rossmans are very fine people, Emily. I'm glad to hear it," she said emphatically.



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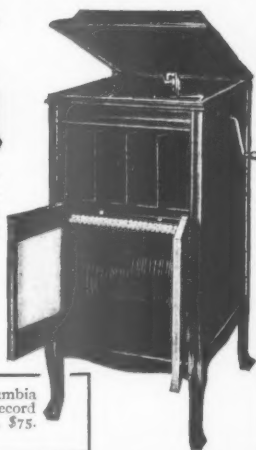
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Shugrue's Valediction

By Thomas
Gray Fessenden

*THE story of the Smoke Eater
who had grown too old.*

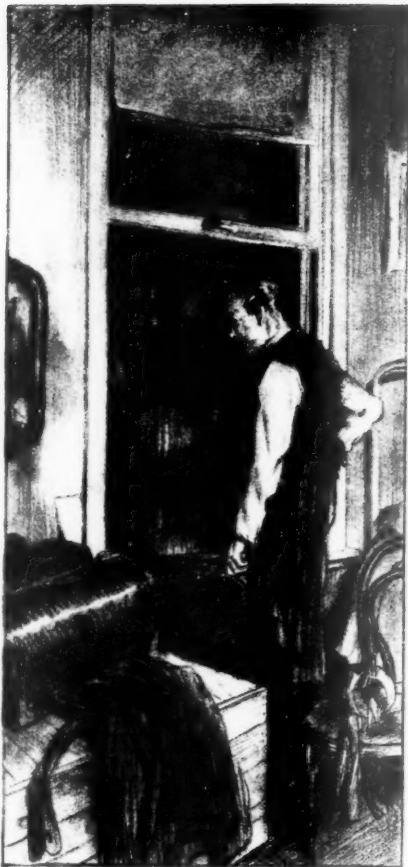
ILLUSTRATED BY
GRANT T. REYNARD

LIEUTENANT NEELY'S door was ajar. It was what might be termed *carefully* ajar. Anyone passing along the hall would never have noticed that the door was not shut unless he had given it the closest scrutiny.

Neely himself sat listening, with his feet cocked up on the blotter of his desk. From Captain Shugrue's room across the hall came the tramp of heavy steps, pacing to and fro incessantly. Anon they paused for a moment, and Neely could see in his mind's eye Captain Shugrue's well-knit figure standing there before the narrow window as Shugrue gazed out across low roofs to the flicker and glare of lights beyond them. Then always the pacing began again, up and down, up and down interminably. It was worse than the scraping of trunks across the floor that had preceded it, and the sound of opened drawers and the thud of things tossed from the drawers into the trunks.

Neely's brows drew together in an anxious frown. That incessant pacing was a bad sign. After all—despite the fine front he was putting up about it—Shugrue was taking it hard. Now that the actual moment was at hand he was feeling the bitter sting of it. All that too evident nonchalance which had been Shugrue's these past few days was just a bluff, even as Neely had suspected it of being.

At midnight Shugrue, according to an order from headquarters earlier in the



Shugrue gazed out across the low roofs to the lights beyond.

week, was to be retired on half pay; retired after forty-odd years of service, twenty-five of those years as captain of Engine 87.

Shugrue being quite alone in the world, and withal always a prudent man, the half-pay, together with what he had saved, would see him through somewhat more than comfortably. Financially there was nothing at all to worry about so far as Shugrue was concerned; nor was it anything in the pecuniary line that was worrying Neely.

He listened to the tread of those heavy steps on the bare floor of the room across the hall. They told him many things—

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those restless, pacing steps. He didn't like them. He had been half afraid all the time of something like this at the end.

Neely was well aware what it all meant to Shugrue. The service had been Shugrue's home, his life, almost his god. He had never married, and for the past twenty-five years his quarters here at 87 had been his home. That was one of the things that made it harder. It was not only giving up active service for Shugrue; it was giving up his home, too—all the home he had known in twenty-five years; and at Shugrue's time of life changes are not easily made, nor habits of a lifetime easily given up.

Neely, made captain of 87 by the same order that retired Shugrue, felt himself almost a usurper—as if he somehow were to blame for what he knew Shugrue was suffering in that little room across the hall.

An unmarried man himself and gray-ing perceptibly at the temples, Neely could perhaps realize better than many another man what it all meant to Shugrue.

Neely did not at all like those steadily tramping footsteps. Of course, when a man got along in years he must be expecting things like this; but Shugrue was a wonderful man for his years. He bore them lightly. His spare frame was still straight as an arrow; his eyes were still sharp; his decisions just as quick and sure as they ever were; there was many a good fight left in Shugrue yet. But he *was* getting on in years; there was no denying that. Neely had the grace to give the department credit for giving Shugrue a good five years more than it would have given most men.

Again the pacing ceased, and again Neely could see perfectly, Shugrue standing at that window and looking out—at the glow of lights on the Empire movie theatre and the many colored splashes of the illuminated brewery sign on one of the high buildings in Decatur Square.

He jerked down his feet from the blotter, got out of his desk chair and moved towards that door of his that was opened the barest crack. Three times before in the course of the last half-hour he had started to cross the hall to

Shugrue's room, and each time he had returned, sheepishly and with a slow shaking of his head, to his seat at his desk.

This time he hunched his shoulders like a man bolstering up a wavering determination, opened his own door, crossed the hall and tapped on the door of the Captain's quarters.

"Come in!" said Shugrue's voice.

NEELY entered, smiling. That smile was palpably held on his features by sheer will power. It was a sorry, sickly smile—one of the kind that is made by stretching the mouth a bit and tightening the skin over the cheek-bones. It was supposed to be ingratiating, but its utter lack of spontaneity made it a ghastly fizzle.

With that made-to-order smile still held in pose, Neely swept his eyes about the bare walls, the empty closet, the cleaned-out desk. His gaze centered finally on two trunks, stuffed so full neither cover would shut.

"Well, all packed up, Cap', I see," he said with the chirky air of one who had made a brilliant and important discovery.

"Sit down, Dan," Shugrue invited, kicking forward a chair.

Then he rummaged in a pigeon-hole of that cleaned-out desk.

"And have a cigar," he went on, thrusting one at Neely.

The lieutenant took it, broke off the end with his thumb-nail and lighted a match.

It was a warm June night. The window was wide open. The buzz and bang and clang of night traffic in the streets drifted in through it.

Shugrue lighted a cigar himself. The smile he engineered was considerably better than Neely's.

"Well, by this time to-morrow night, Dan," said he, "I'll be up at the camp. It'll be cool up there. I'll be overhaulin' the fishin' gear and wonderin' whether I'll try the hole above the rapids or the one at Three-Pine Island in the mornin'. I'll be a free man. I wont be beholden to nobody nor answerable to nobody."

Neely blew out a great cloud of smoke. He took in a breath and opened



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his lips, but he did not speak, as he had seemed about to do.

"I'll be free," Shugrue repeated.

"Some of us has luck," said Neely with a great show of envy—a wholly artificial show.

"Yes, *some* of us has," said Shugrue with unmistakable emphasis.

"I wisht it was me," said Neely.

Shugrue looked out the window.

"It's a good time to be leavin', with signs of a hot spell comin' on," said Shugrue.

"By to-morrow night we'll be swelterin'," Neely agreed.

"I aint never yet got my fill of fishin'. I'm goin' to have it now," Shugrue declared.

Again he looked out the window. He seemed trying to keep his eyes from that window, but they would stray back there every few minutes.

"I'll think of you poor swelterin' slaves down here while I'm fishin'," he pursued.

"You certainly aint got no kick comin'," Neely argued. "You can go where you want and do what you want from now on."

"Yes, I'm pretty well fixed," Shugrue admitted, albeit with a wistfulness that did not escape the Lieutenant.

"I don't see's there's anything more you could want," Neely enthused.

Shugrue took a few thoughtful pulls at his weed.

"I should 'a' liked to 'a' had one last brisk little blaze to roll to to-night—to sorter ended it all up fittin'-like," said he.

"Well now, maybe you will get it," Neely said. "Stranger things has happened. Can I help you shut them trunks?"

"In the mornin'," Shugrue replied. "I'll leave 'em open in case there's anything I've forgot. But in the mornin' I'll be obliged if you'll stomp on 'em while I get 'em locked."

"Well, if you've got all them miles to cover to-morrer, you'll be wantin' a little sleep," said Neely. "I guess I'll turn in. I hope there will be a chance to roll to-night, for your sake, Cap'," Neely remarked as he arose and opened the door.

Once back in his own room he sat down at the desk again. The pacing across the hall had ceased. He felt better about Shugrue. He did seem really eager to get at his fishing. Perhaps it hadn't been such a bluff after all—those high spirits of Shugrue's.

Neely, puffing intermittently at his cigar, was much easier in his mind. What with the soft warmth of the night, the soothing aroma of his weed between his fingers and his mental relief, his head began to droop. The cigar slipped unnoticed from his fingers and made a little round blister on the varnish of the floor. Then his head rolled sidewise and his cap fell off. Neely, with his feet still on the desk, slept gurglingly.

THE clanging of the tapper awakened him. Even before his feet came down from the desk or his sleepy eyes were thoroughly opened, he knew instinctively it was a box number on which 87 rolled.

As he jumped into the hall and scurried for the pole his ears were pricked up for the number.

"Twelve hundred eighty-four," he muttered, counting the strokes. "Hall and Tyler Streets. Down round the lumber yards. Maybe there'll be somethin' doin'."

He was thinking of Captain Shugrue as he spoke.

Eighty-seven made a quick run of it through the June night. A shirt-sleeved man by the box on the corner of Hall and Tyler Streets made a trumpet of his hands as they tore up to him.

"Lindsay's plant," he bellowed, jerking his head down Tyler Street.

The three horses of the engine swung sharply into Tyler Street; the hose-wagon came rumbling close behind. Glass puffed out and came tinkling to the sidewalk just ahead of them; then a roll of flame and smoke shot out of the second and third story windows of the long building which housed the Lindsay Company's wood-turning plant.

Neely leaped from the hose-wagon.

"I guess you've got it, Cap'," he shouted as he brushed past Shugrue, stepping down from the ash-pan of the engine.

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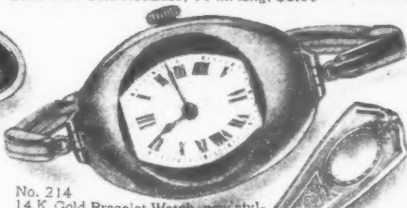


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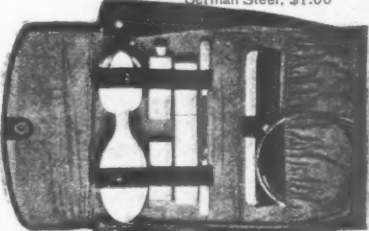
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"Looks that way," said Shugrue, casting a comprehensive glance up at the blazing building.

A ladder truck came galloping up and began running up "sticks" against the front of the building.

Another engine company—79—on the scene before 87, swarmed up with lines of hose.

Shugrue looked the place over critically.

"It's in the front," he roared as Neely was directing the hose coupling. "Take yer lines and foller me. We'll bust in the door and get in behind it and soak it down on that side. Take one line up to the second floor, Dan. I'll get a couple up to the third, where it seems to be worst."

Two more alarms went in just after that. The littered floors of the wood-working plant offered excellent fuel for the flames. They roared away merrily, and spread and mushroomed and burst through the roof.

At a little after midnight the front wall began to waver and belly threateningly. A deputy chief, in charge of the fire, ordered everybody out.

A sooty-faced hoseman brought the word of retreat to Neely and his men, who had been driven back inch by inch on the second floor. They came out of the smoke-choked place, coughing, sputtering, pulling in great draughts of the fresh air outside.

The front wall was groaning and creaking like a thing in agony. It was bulging out farther and farther. It was plain to see it might go at any minute.

Neely looked round for Shugrue, and, even as he sought him, Johnny Beevens, one of the hosemen whom Shugrue had taken in with him to that third floor, came panting up.

"Say, Cap', now —" he puffed because he was choked with smoke, "Cap', now—"

"What about him?" Neely demanded.

Johnny Beevens spat forth a mouthful of sooty saliva.

"He's actin' queer," he grunted. "Word come to get out and he sent us all out; but he never come with us. I



Shugrue looked up. "Get out of here," he ordered.



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thought he was comin' or I wouldn't 'a' left him. He's up there now—"

Neely leaped forward with a wild yell. The deputy chief, holding back the men from that bulging wall, caught his arm.

"Wall's goin'," he roared.

Neely tore himself loose.

"Tim Shugrue's in there—on the third floor," he howled.

The deputy chief made no further effort to restrain him. He watched Neely rush with lowered head for the door, and, being a pious man, the deputy chief muttered an *Ora Pro Nobis* under his breath as Neely disappeared.

Neely stumbled and fought his way up two flights of blistering, smoldering stairs. At the top of the second flight he stumbled over a length of hose—live hose, he could tell, from the feel of his boot-toe against it. He followed it. Presently in the glare of flames he saw a figure lying prone across the nozzle of that hose—a figure with hunched shoulders and low-pulled helmet. It was Shugrue, calmly directing the stream, hopeless as it was, into the seething, twisting red sheet.

"Hey!" he roared. "Hey!"

Shugrue looked up.

"Get out of here!" he snarled.

"My God, Cap'!" Neely cried. "The front wall's bulgin' clean out of her. It's goin' any minute. You know how a buildin' like this'll crumple up when a wall goes."

"Let her go!" snapped Shugrue. "And say, you get outer this! Get out blamed quick, too!"

Neely stooped to clutch that prostrate figure, and Shugrue kicked out at him viciously with a heavy fire-boot.

Neely felt his heart trying to get out of his throat.

"Cap', Cap'," he begged brokenly. "yer fishin' to-morrow—think of it! Yer fishin' up at the camp—"

"Blow the fishin'! Who wants to fish?" howled Shugrue.

Again Neely bent clawingly over him, and again the fire-boot thrashed about, barely missing Neely's face. He staggered back. He stared at Shugrue in unbelief.

"Mother of Heaven!" he cried. "Is

this what it comes to? Is this what you get for forty years of service—layin' acrost a hose and waitin' for a wall to cave and take yer down with it? Is that all? Oh God, is that all? Is that what I'm comin' to some day myself?"

Shugrue's wiry figure stiffened across the nozzle. Slowly his knees were drawn in under him. Then, as if shot up by steel springs, he bounded up.

He grabbed Neely by the shoulders. He began to shake him.

"Say, what in time are you ravin' about?" he shouted, but Neely saw his eyes were turned away. "What in time and creation are you makin' such a fuss over? Can't ye let an old man play a little with his last fire—his *very* last fire? Ye talk like an old woman, Neely—and ye've got wrong ideas in yer fool noodle—get me? Now come on outer here!"

Deserting the hose he pounced upon Neely and down they tumbled, helter-skelter—any old way—through the sagging doorway, into the clear air of the street. And just as they reached 87 by her hydrant, the front wall came down with a roaring, deafening crash.

A WEEK later, Neely sat in the captain's room at 87's house. It was a sweltering June day. The heat came up from the sidewalks in smothering waves. Neely's chair was tilted back. His shoeless feet were on the desk-top. He was reading a souvenir post card.

It was the usual thing, glazed, highly-colored, ornate. It represented a low red brick building of colonial architecture. It was captioned, "The Sewell Memorial Library, Westville, Maine."

The correspondence space on the front of the card was covered with Shugrue's heavy and sprawling handwriting. It read:

Great country up here. Wish you were with me. Weather fine. Good fishing. I'm sending you one of the whales I landed, by express to-day. I'm going to like it up here all right.

That was all. But Neely patted the likeness of the Sewell Memorial Library and grinned placidly. Neely understood completely.

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HEPSEY BURKE—a new “David Harum”

Continued from page 304 of this issue

think that any parson in a place like this ought to know and face all the difficulties of the situation before he comes to a definite decision and marries. Isn't that your own view? You've had experience of married parsons here: what do you think?"

"Well, you see the matter is just like this: Every parish wants an unmarried parson; the vestry 'cause he's cheap, every unmarried woman 'cause he may be a possible suitor; and it's easier to run him than it is a married man. He may be decent, well-bred and educated. And he comes to a parcel of ignoramuses who think they know ten times as much as he does. If he can't earn enough to marry on, and has the good sense to keep out of matrimony, the people talk about his bein' a selfish old bachelor who neglects his duty to society. He can't afford to run a tumble-down rectory like ours. If in the face of all this he marries, he has to scrimp and stint until it is a question of buyin' one egg or two, and lettin' his wife worry and work until she's fit for a lunatic asylum. No business corporation, not even a milk-peddlin' trust, would treat its men so or expect good work from 'em. Then the average layman seldom thinks how he can help the parson. His one idea is to be a kicker as long as he can think of anything to kick about. The only man in this parish who never kicks is paralyzed in both legs. Yes sir; the parson of the country parish is the parish goat, as the sayin' is."

MRS. BURKE ceased her tirade, and after a while Maxwell remarked quietly:

"Mrs. Burke, I'm afraid you are a pessimist."

"I'm no such thing," she retorted hotly. "A pessimist's a man that sees nothin' but the bad, and says there's no help for it and wont raise a hand: he's a proper sour-belly. An optimist's a man that sees nothin' but the good, and says everything's all right; let's have a good

time. Poor fool! The practical man—anyway, the practical woman—sees both the bad and the good, and says we can make things a whole lot better if we try; let's take off our coats and hustle to beat the cars, and see what happens. The real pessimists are your Bascoms, and that kind: and I guess I pity him more than blame him: he seems as lonesome as a tooth-pick in a cider-barrel."

"But I thought that Bascom was a wealthy man. He ought to be able to help out, and raise money enough so that the town could keep a parson and his wife comfortably."

"Sure thing! But the church isn't supported by tight-fisted wealthy people. It's the hard-workin' middle class who are willin' to turn in and spend their last cent for the church. And don't you get me started on Bascom as you value your life. Maybe I'll swear a blue streak before I get through: not but what I suppose that even Bascom has his good points—like a porcupine. But a little emery paper on Bascom's good points wouldn't hurt 'em very much. They're awful rusty."

"Oh well! Money isn't all there is in life," soothed Maxwell, smiling.

"No, not quite; but it's a mighty good thing to have in the house. You'd think so if you had to wear the same hat three summers. I've got to that time in my life where I can get along very well without most of the necessities; but I must have a few luxuries to keep me goin'."

"Then you think that a clergyman ought not to marry and bring his wife to a place like Durford?"

"I didn't say anything of the sort. If you was to get married I'd see you through, if it broke my neck or Bascom's."

"Do you know you seem to me a bit illogical?" remarked Maxwell mildly.

"Don't talk to me about logic! The strongest argument is often the biggest lie. There are times in your life when you have to take your fate in both hands

the "Livest Wire" in the Theater

*A Man of
Surprises and
Suddenness*

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In days past, there probably wasn't a better known troupe on the American stage than Jerry J. Cohan, his wife Helen F. Cohan and their two children, George M. and Josephine Cohan. The January GREEN BOOK gives you their delightful history from the time that Jerry Cohan, aged thirteen, went to the war, to the time when his sister "made him introduced" to a shy little Irish girl, Helen Costigan, who had never before seen an actor; then their marriage and the travels of their Hibernicon, and then the most interesting part of all—the birth of their babies, the trials of their raising amidst the troubles of the road, and finally the formation of the family organization.



GEORGE M. COHAN, AS
Broadway Jones, HIS
LAST ACTED ROLE

The stories offer constant surprise, from the time when Mr. Cohan entered the theater on the back of a donkey; when, at the age of four he sold song-books in the audience and lent his mother money for her shopping; when, still in kilts, he began "dotting down" his songs; when, by chance, he developed—suddenly, one day, into a dancer; when, unknown to his parents, he began taking contracts to write vaudeville sketches over-night—to to-day. And these are only a very few incidents that go to make up the first installment of this series.



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and shut your eyes, and jump in the dark. Maybe you'll land on your feet, and maybe you—wont. But you have got to jump just the same. That's matrimony—common sense, idiocy, or whatever you choose to call it. . . . I never could tell which. It's the only thing to do; and any man with a backbone and a fist wont hesitate very long. If you marry, I'll see you through; though of course you wont stay here long, anyhow."

"You're awfully kind, Mrs. Burke," Maxwell replied, "and I sha'n't forget your promise—when the time comes for me to take the momentous step. But I think it would be the wisest thing for me to keep my heart free for a while; or at any rate, not to get married."

Mrs. Burke looked down at her rector, and smiled broadly at his clever evasion of the bait she had dangled before him so persistently.

"Well, do as you like; but that reminds me that when next you go to town you'll need to get a new glass for that miniature of your sister. You must have dozed off with it in your hands last night and dropped it. I found it this morning on the floor alongside of your chair, with the glass broken."

She rose triumphantly, as she knitted the last stitch of the wash-rag. "Excuse me—I must go and peel the potatoes for dinner."

"I'd offer to contribute to the menu, by catching some fish for you; but I don't think it's a very good day for fishing, is it, Mrs. Burke?" asked Maxwell innocently.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ICE-BOX FOR CHERUBIM

AS we have seen, when Maxwell began his work in Durford, he was full of the enthusiasm of youth and inexperience. He was, however, heartily supported and encouraged in his efforts by all but Sylvester Bascom. Without being actively and openly hostile, the Senior Warden, under the guise of superior wisdom and a judicial regard for expediency, managed to thwart many of his projects. After each interview with Bascom, Max-

well felt that every bit of life and heart had been pumped out of him, and that he was very young, and very foolish to attempt to make any change in "the good old ways" of the parish, which for so many years had stunted its growth and had acquired the immobility of the laws of the Medes and Persians.

But there was one parishioner who was ever ready to suggest new ventures to "elevate" the people, and to play the part of intimate friend and adviser to her good-looking rector, and that was Virginia Bascom. For some unknown reason "the people" did not seem to be acutely anxious thus to be elevated; and most of them seemed to regard Virginia as a harmless idiot with good intentions, but with positive genius for meddling in other people's affairs. Being the only daughter of the Senior Warden, and the leading lady from a social standpoint, she considered that she had a roving commission to set people right at a moment's notice; and there were comparatively few people in Durford on whom she had not experimented in one way or another. She organized a Browning club to keep the factory girls out of the streets evenings, a mothers' meeting, an ethical culture society, and a craftman's club, and, as she was made president of each, her time was quite well filled.

And now in her fertile brain dawned a brilliant idea, which she proceeded to propound to the rector. Maxwell was non-committal, for he felt the matter was one for feminine judgment. Then she decided to consult Mrs. Burke—because, while Hepsey was "not in society," she was recognized as the dominant personality among the women of the village. As Virginia told Maxwell, "Mrs. Burke has a talent of persuasiveness," and so was "useful in any emergency." If Mrs. Burke's sympathies could be enlisted on behalf of the new scheme it would be bound to succeed.

As a matter of fact, Mrs. Burke had heard rumors of this new project of Virginia's. It always went against the grain with Hepsey to say: "Don't do it." She was a firm believer in the teaching of experience: "Experience does it," was her translation of the classic adage.

And so one morning found Virginia

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sitting opposite Mrs. Burke in the kitchen at Thunder Cliff, knitting her brows and poking the toe of her boot with the end of her parasol in an absent-minded way. This was symptomatic.

"Anything on your mind, Virginia? What's up now?" Mrs. Burke began.

For a moment Virginia hesitated, and then replied:

"I am thinking of establishing a day-nursery to care for the babies of working women, Mrs. Burke."

Mrs. Burke, with hands on her hips, gazed intently at her visitor, pushed up her under lip, scowled, and then observed thoughtfully:

"I wonder some one hasn't thought of that before. Who's to take care of the babies?"

"Mary Quinn and I, with the assistance of others, of course."

"Are you sure that you know which is the business end of a nursing-bottle? Could you put a safety-pin where it would do the most good? Could you wash a baby without drownin' it?"

"Of course I have not had much experience," Virginia replied in a dignified and lofty way, "but Mary Quinn has, and she could teach me."

"You're thinkin', I suppose, that a day-nursery would fill a long-felt want, or somethin' like that. Who's goin' to pay the bills?"

"Oh, there ought to be enough progressive, philanthropic people in Durford to subscribe the necessary funds, you know. It is to be an auxiliary to the parish work."

"Hm! What does Mr. Maxwell say?"

"Well, he said that he supposed that babies were good things in their way; but he hadn't seen many in the village, and he didn't quite realize what help a day-nursery would be to the working women."

"That doesn't sound mighty enthusiastic. Maybe we might get the money; but who's to subscribe the babies?"

"Why, the working women, of course."

"They can't subscribe 'em if they haven't got 'em. There are mighty few kids in this town; and if you really want my candid opinion, I don't think Durford needs a day-nursery any more than it needs an ice-box for cherubim. But

then of course that doesn't matter much. When you goin' to begin?"

"Next Monday. We have rented the store where Elkin's grocery used to be, and we are going to fit it up with cribs, and all the most up-to-date conveniences for a sanitary day-nursery."

"Hm! Well, I'll do all I can to help you, of course. I suppose you'll find babies pushin' all over the sidewalk Monday mornin', comin' early to avoid the rush. Better get down as early as possible, Virginia."

Virginia departed.

AFTER the furnishing of the incipient nursery had been completed, and each little crib had a new unbreakable doll whose cheeks were decorated with unsuckable paint, Virginia and Mary Quinn—invaluable in undertaking the spadework of all Virginia's parish exploits—gave an afternoon tea to which all the subscribers and their friends were invited. But when everything was in readiness for patronage, what few working women there were in Durford, possessed of the right kind of babies, seemed strangely reluctant to trust their youthful offspring to the tender mercies of Virginia Bascom and Mary Quinn.

Consequently, the philanthropic movement, started under such favorable patronage, soon reached a critical stage in its career, and Mrs. Burke was called in to contribute some practical suggestions. She responded to the summons with all due promptness, and when she arrived at the nursery, she smilingly remarked:

"Hm! But where are the babies? I thought they would be swarming all over the place like tadpoles in a pool."

"Well, you see," Virginia began, her voice quivering with disappointment, "Mary Quinn and I have been sitting here four mortal days, and not a single infant has appeared on the scene. I must say that the working women of Durford seem strangely unappreciative of our efforts to help them."

"Well," Mrs. Burke responded, "I suppose day-nurseries without babies are as incomplete as an incubator without eggs. But after all, it hardly seems worth while to go out and snatch nursing infants from their mother's breasts just to



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fill a long-felt want, does it? Besides, you might get yourself into trouble."

"I didn't ask you to come and make fun of me," Virginia replied touchily. "I wanted you to make some suggestions to help us out. If we don't get any babies, we might just as well close our doors at once. I should be awfully mortified to have the whole thing a failure, after all we have done, and all the advertising we have had."

Mrs. Burke sat down and assumed a very judicial expression.

"Well, Ginty dear, I'm awful sorry for you; I don't doubt you done the best you could. It'd be unreasonable to expect you to collect babies like mushrooms in a single night. All true reformers are bound to strike snags, and to suffer because they aint appreciated in their own day and generation. It's only after we are gone and others take our places that the things we do are appreciated. You'll have to resign yourself to fate, Virginia, and wait for what the newspapers call 'the vindicatin' verdict of prosperity.' Think of all the people that tried to do things and didn't do 'em. Now there's the Christian martyrs—"

For some reason Virginia seemed to have a vague suspicion that Hepsey was still making fun of her; and being considerably nettled, she interjected tartly:

"I'm not working for the verdict of posterity, and I don't care a flip for the Christian martyrs. I'm trying to conduct a day-nursery, here and now; we have the beds, and the equipment, and some money, and—"

"But you haven't got the babies, Virginia!"

"Precisely, Mrs. Burke. It's simply a question of babies, now or never. Babies we must have or close our doors. I must confess that I am greatly pained at the lack of interest of the community in our humble efforts to serve them."

FOR some time Hepsey sat in silence; then she smiled as if a bright idea occurred to her.

"Why not borrow a few babies from the mothers in town, Virginia? You see you might offer to pay a small rental by the hour, or take out a lease which could be renewed when it expired. What

is lacking is public confidence in your enterprise. If you and Miss Quinn could be seen in the nursery windows dandlin' a baby on each arm, and singin' lullabies to 'em for a few days, it'd attract attention, inspire faith in the timid, and public confidence would be restored. The tide of babies 'd turn your way after a while, and the nursery would prove a howlin' success."

Virginia considered the suggestion and, after deep thought, remarked:

"What do you think we ought to pay for the loan of a baby per hour, Mrs. Burke?"

"Well, of course I haven't had much experience rentin' babies, as I have been busy payin' taxes and insurance on my own for some years; then you see rents have gone up like everything lately. But I should think that ten cents an afternoon ought to be sufficient. I think I might be able to hunt up a baby or two. Mrs. Warren might lend her baby, and perhaps Mrs. Fletcher might add her twins. I'll call on them at once, if you say so."

Virginia looked relieved, and in a voice of gratitude responded:

"You are really very, very kind."

"Well, cheer up, Virginia; cheer up. Every cloud has its silver linin'; and I guess we can find some babies somewhere even if we have to advertise in the papers. Now I must be goin', and I'll stop on the way and make a bid for the Fletcher twins. Good-by."

When Nicholas Burke learned from his mother of the quest of the necessary babies, he started out of his own motion and was the first to arrive on the scene with the spoils of victory, in the shape of the eighteen-months infant of Mrs. Thomas McCarthy, for which he had been obliged to pay twenty-five cents in advance, the infant protesting vigorously with all the power of a well developed pair of lungs. As Nickey delivered the goods, he remarked casually:

"Say, Miss Virginia, you just take the darn thing quick. He's been howlin' to beat the band."

"Why, Nickey," exclaimed Virginia, entranced, and gingerly possessing herself of James McCarthy, "however did you get him?"

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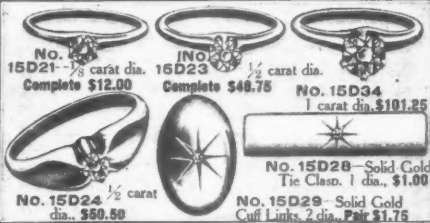
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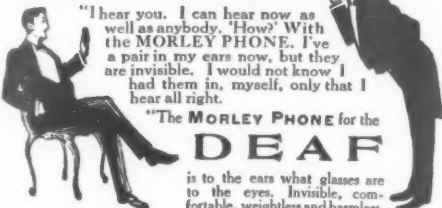
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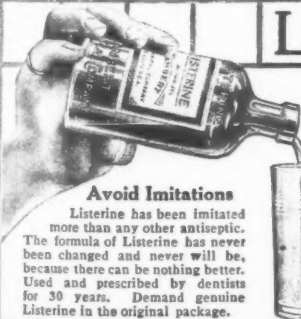


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HEPSEY BURKE

"His ma wouldn't let me have him at first; and it took an awful lot of jollyin' to bring her round. Of course I didn't mean to tell no lies, but I said you was awful fond of kids. I said that if you only had Jimmy, it would give the nursery a dandy send-off, 'cause she was so well known, and Mr. McCarthy was such a prominent citizen. When she saw me cough up a quarter and play with it right under her nose, I could see she was givin' in; and she says to me, 'Nickey, you can take him just this once. I'd like to help the good cause along, and Miss Bascom, she means well.' Ma's gettin' after the Fletcher twins for you."

JAMES MCCARTHY was welcomed with open arms, was washed and dressed in the most approved antiseptic manner; his gums were swabbed with boracic acid, and he was fed from a sterilized bottle on Pasteurized milk, and tucked up in a crib with carbolized sheets, and placed close to the window where he could bask in actinic rays, and inhale ozone to his heart's content. Thus the passer-by could see at a glance that the good work had begun to bear fruit.

Mrs. Burke managed to get hold of the Fletcher twins, and as they both howled lustily in unison, all the time, they added much to the natural domesticity of the scene and seemed to invite further patronage, like barkers at a sideshow. Mrs. Warren was also persuaded.

Although the village was thoroughly canvassed, Miss Bascom was obliged to content herself with the McCarthy baby and the Fletcher twins, and the Warren baby, until, one morning, a colored woman appeared with a bundle in her arms. As she was the first voluntary contributor of live stock, she was warmly welcomed, and a great fuss made over the tiny black infant which gradually emerged from the folds of an old shawl "like a cuckoo out of its cocoon," as Mary Quinn remarked. This, of course, was very nice and encouraging, but most unfortunately, when night came, the mother did not appear to claim her progeny, nor did she ever turn up again. Of course it was a mere oversight on her part, but Virginia was much disturbed, for, to her very great embarrassment, she

found herself the undisputed possessor of a coal black baby. She was horrified beyond measure, and sent at once for Mrs. Burke.

"What shall I do, what shall I do, Mrs. Burke?" she cried. Mrs. Burke gazed musingly at the writhing black blot on the white and rose blanket, and suggested:

"Pity you couldn't adopt it, Virginia. You always loved children."

"Adopt it!" Virginia screamed hysterically. "What in the world can you be thinking of?"

"Well, I can't think of anything else, unless I can persuade Andy Johnston, the colored man on the farm, to adopt it. He wouldn't mind its complexion as much as you seem to."

Virginia brightened considerably at this suggestion, exclaiming excitedly:

"Oh Mrs. Burke, do you really think you could?"

"Well, I don't know. Perhaps so. At any rate, if we offer to help pay the extra expense, Mrs. Johnston might bring the baby up as her own. Then they can name it Virginia Bascom Johnston, you see."

Virginia bit her lip, but she managed to control her temper as she exclaimed quite cheerfully:

"Mrs. Burke, you are so very kind. You are always helping somebody out of a scrape."

"Don't overpraise me, Virginia. My head's easily turned. The teachin's of experience are hard—but I guess they're best in the end. Well, send the poor little imp of darkness round to me to-night, and I'll see that it has good care."

As a matter of fact, Hepsey had qualms of conscience as to whether she should not, at the outset, have discouraged the whole baby project; experience threatened to give its lesson by pretty hard knocks, on this occasion.

For though the immediate problem was thus easily solved, others presented themselves to vex the philanthropic Virginia.

When on the tenth day the rental for the Warren baby and the Fletcher twins fell due, and the lease of James McCarthy expired without privilege of renewal, the finances of the nursery were

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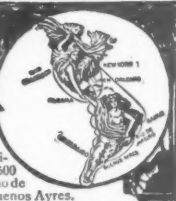
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at a very low ebb. It certainly did not help matters much when, towards night, Mary Quinn called Virginia's attention to the fact that there were unmistakable signs of a bad rash on the faces of the twins, and very suspicious spots on the cheeks of the Warren baby. Even the antiseptic James McCarthy blushed like a boiled lobster, and went hopelessly back on his sterilized character. Of course the only thing to be done was to send at once for the doctor, and for the mothers of the respective infants. When the doctor arrived he pronounced the trouble to be measles; and when the mothers made their appearance, Virginia learned something of the unsuspected resources of the English language served hot from the tongues of three frightened and irate women. Finally the floor was cleared, and the place closed up for disinfection.

Just before she left, Virginia dropped into a chair and wept, quite oblivious of the well-meant consolations of Mary Quinn.

"We've done the very best we could, Miss Bascom; and it certainly isn't our fault that the venture turned out badly. Poor babes!"

At this the sobbing Virginia was roused to one last protest:

"Mary Quinn, if ever you say another word to me about babies, I'll have you arrested. I just hate babies, and—and everything! Why, there comes Mr. Maxwell! Say, Mary, you just run and get me a wet towel to wipe my face with, while I hunt for my combs and do up my back hair. And then if you wouldn't mind vanishing for a while—I'm sure you understand—for if ever I needed spiritual consolation and the help of the church, it is now, this minute."

CHAPTER X

THE RECTORY

A FEW weeks after Donald's conversational duel with Mrs. Burke he started on a six-weeks vacation, which he had certainly earned; and as he busied himself with his packing,—Hepsey assisting,—he announced:

"When I come back, Mrs. Burke, I probably shall not come alone."

He was strapping up his suit-case when he made this rather startling announcement, and the effect seemed to send the blood to his head. Mrs. Burke did not seem to notice his confusion as she remarked calmly:

"Hm! That's a good thing. Your grandmother can have the room next to yours, and we'll do all we can to make the old lady comfortable. I'm sure she'll be a great comfort to you, though she'll get a bit lonesome at times, unless she's active on her feet."

Donald laughed, as he blushed more furiously and stuttered:

"No, I am not going to bring my grandmother here, and I strongly suspect that you know what I mean. I'm going to be married."

"So you are going to get married, are you?" Hepsey remarked with due amazement, as if the suspicion of the fact had never entered her head before. "Well, I am mighty glad of it. I only wish that I was goin' to be present to give you away. Yes, I'm mighty glad. She'll make a new man of you up here, so long as she isn't a new woman."

"No, not in the slang sense of the word; although I think you will find her very capable, and I hope with all my heart that you'll like her."

"I'm sure I shall. The question is whether she'll like me."

Hepsey Burke looked rather sober for a moment, and Donald instantly asserted:

"She can't help liking you."

"We-ell now, I could mention quite a number of people who find it as easy as rolling off a log to *dislike* me. But that doesn't matter much. I have found it a pretty good plan not to expect a great deal of adoration, and to be mighty grateful for the little you get. Be sure you let me know when to expect you and your grandmother back."

"Most certainly I shall," he laughed. "It will be in about six weeks, you know. Good-by, and thank you a thousand times for all your kindness to me."

There was considerable moisture in Hepsey's eyes as she stood and watched Maxwell drive down the road. Then

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wiping her eyes furtively with one corner of her apron she remarked to herself:

"Well, I suppose I am glad, mighty glad; but somehow it isn't the jolliest thing in the world to have one's friends get married. They are never the same again; and in ten times out of six the lady in the case is jealous of her husband's friends, and tries to make trouble. It takes a lady saint to share her husband's interests with anybody, and maybe she aint to blame. Well, the next thing in order is to fix up the rectory in six weeks. The best way to repair that thing is with a match and some real good kerosine and a few shavings; however, we'll have to do the best we can. I think I'll set Jonathan Jackson to work this afternoon, and go around and interview the vestry myself."

JONATHAN proved resignedly obedient to Hepsey's demands, but the vestry blustered and scolded, because they had not been consulted in the matter, until Hepsey said she would be glad to receive any contribution they might choose to offer; then they relapsed into innocuous desuetude and talked crops.

As soon as the repairs were well under way, the whole town was wild with gossip about Maxwell and Miss Bascom. If he were going to occupy the rectory, the necessary inference was that he was going to be married, as he surely would not contemplate keeping bachelor's hall by himself. At last Virginia had attained the height of her ambition and captured the rector! Consequently she was the center of interest in every social gathering, although, as the engagement had not been formally announced, no one felt at liberty to congratulate her. To any tentative and insinuating advances in this direction Virginia replied by non-committal smiles, capable of almost any interpretation; and the seeker after information was none the wiser.

Mrs. Roscoe-Jones, by virtue of her long intimacy with Hepsey and her assured social position in Durford's thirty gentry, felt that she was entitled to some definite information; and so, as they

walked back from church one Wednesday afternoon, she remarked:

"I hear that the parish is going to repair the rectory, and that you are taking a great interest in it. You must be on very intimate terms with Mr. Bascom and the vestry!"

"Well, not exactly. Bascom and I haven't held hands in the dark for some time; but I am going to do what I can to get the house in order for Mr. Maxwell."

"I wonder where the money is coming from to complete the work. It seems to me that the whole parish ought to be informed about the matter, and share in the work; but I suppose Mr. Bascom's shouldering it all, since there's been no effort to raise money by having a fair."

"I really don't know much about it as yet, Sarah. Of course Bascom's charitable work is mostly done in secret, so that nobody ever finds it out. He is a modest man and wouldn't like to be caught in the act of signing a check for anybody else. It might seem showy."

"Yes, I understand," Mrs. Roscoe-Jones retorted dryly; "but under the circumstances, that is—"

"Under what circumstances?" Mrs. Burke inquired quickly.

"Oh, considering that Mr. Bascom is Virginia's father and would want to make her comfortable, you know—"

"No, I don't know. I'm awful stupid about some things. You must have discovered that before."

"Now Hepsey, what is the use of beating around the bush like this? You must know the common gossip of the town, and you must be in Mr. Maxwell's confidence. What shall I say when people ask me if he is engaged to Virginia Bascom?"

"Tell 'em you don't know a blessed thing about it. What else can you tell 'em? You might tell 'em that you tried to pump me and the pump wouldn't work 'cause it needed packin'."

After this, Mrs. Roscoe-Jones felt that there was nothing left for her to do but retire from the scene; so she crossed the road.

The next installment of "Hepsey Burke" will be in the January Red Book Magazine, on the news-stands December twenty-third.

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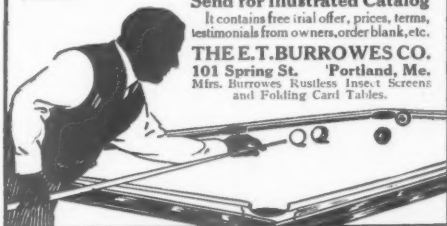
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EMPTY POCKETS

Continued from page 266 of this issue

"American—by Polish."

"Oh," said Perry. Polish was picturesque. He tried desperately to find something to say, and accomplished only:

"Been a model long?"

Maryla checked this truth also on the lintel of her lips. She remembered that Dutilh had almost discharged her because she came from where she came from. If she confessed to being a débutante in the model class, she would have to explain how Miss Schuyler had found her in "those sloms."

She answered his "How long?" with a careless "Oh, quite for some time." This satisfied him and she did not mention Muriel's name. Nor did he. He never dreamed that Muriel had brought Maryla into his sphere of influence, nor did Maryla dream that Muriel knew him.

The car slid along the Avenue as if it were a royal sleigh. When they turned into Central Park Maryla found it beautiful beyond remembrance. She saw it with different eyes.

Before, she had been unable to recover from her first view of Fifth Avenue's one long shop window. Now she was used to the window. She had been one of its displays.

Now she was with a gentleman, and the sunset sentimentalism was upon her. She was in a mood for trees and their foliage, for the graceful attitudes of roadways, the bliss of twilight air.

She was an extraordinarily sensitive, fine-strung instrument. Her heart gave back an Aeolian music to the breath of the world. All emotions were hers; the satisfaction of fine cushions, the gloss of enamel, the pulse of the car's speed, the pride of outrunning rival motors. There was a rapture in the mere swerve around another car or a corner; an ecstasy in a sudden arrest to avoid a collision or a murder.

It was miraculous to be seated with this fine gentleman in this little magic

room that ran about among trees and lakes and a series of paradises. There were so many rich people in the world, too: such countless motors of all shapes and sizes, but none so fine as hers. Along the skyline of the reservoir men and women rode by in jiggly silhouette; it was funny to see the daylight between the saddles and the riders.

Maryla exclaimed:

"Look at those ladies, riding those horses! They got no skoits on over their pents. And the policeman on horseback looking right at them, and not arresting them! Isn't it awful?"

Perry, who did not approve of riding breeches unconcealed, agreed that it was.

There were carriages, too, some of them very stately: the varnished horses seemed insufferably conceited: on the high front seat usually sat two lords in uniform and back of them usually two old ladies.

"Are those ladies the wives of those gentlemen?" said Maryla.

"Not officially," said Perry.

He was fascinated by her ceaseless raptures over this tiresome old park drive that he had taken incessantly since he had first taken it in his mother's lap. He was refreshed by her fresh vision of ancient things.

She was like a child born full grown. She was not afraid to like what she saw and to say so. She was not afraid to be grateful. Aphra Shaler and Pet Bettany and most of the women he knew seemed to feel that if they expressed too much satisfaction with his gifts, he would think he had done enough. Aphra had said hardly a "much obliged" for the three hundred dollars' worth of clothes he had bought her that afternoon. Perry had left her in a huff. He began to feel that he was being worked for a good thing—especially now that he saw this beautiful Maryla person pouring forth rhapsodies of gratitude because he took her out for a ride in the park.

He resolved to take her to many

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"Miss Spring Morning" is the title of this complete, book-length novel of the kind you'd pay \$1.50 for in the stores.

It is a story of wonderful beauty and exceptional dramatic power dealing with the romance of an American in Japan.

NINETEEN OTHER STORIES are to be in this best-of-all magazine we've planned for our January issue. Notable among them are:

Bessie Hoover's "Diet Day," another true-to-American-life story of Jule and her husband Milo and her son Jasper.

Detective Burns' and Isabel Ostrander's "The Crevice:" the fourth installment of this great novel reveals America's greatest crooks and America's greatest detective in a tensely exciting struggle.

Seumas MacManus' "Dark Patrick's Blood-horse," an Irish tale fragrant with the poetry and humor of old Erin.

Octavus Roy Cohen's "The Iron Man," a prize-ring story that not only has "the punch" but also a significant idea and a deep human appeal.

Owen Oliver's "The Inhabitant of Mars;" Clarence Herbert New's "Free Lances in Diplomacy;" James Francis Dwyer's "The Treasure of the Black Taupo;" Victor Rousseau's "The Cure Goes Hunting"—these are only a few of the many good things that will make the January **BLUE BOOK** a record breaker.

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

WATCH FOR ITS APPEARANCE DECEMBER FIRST

parks. After Central Park they soared up to Morningside Park, and through the St. Nicholas and Colonial and Fort George Parks, and crossed the Harlem River on the Fordham Bridge to University and Devoe and St. James Parks and the park named after Poe, and back along the Grand Boulevard and Concourse, to Echo, Clarence, and Crotona Parks and up to the great Bronx reservation and out Moshulu Parkway to Van Cortlandt Park. They wound past sumptuous estates to Spuyten Duyvil Creek, a broad and gleaming water streaming out into the monstrous Hudson. They crossed the Ship Canal and found their way to upper Riverside Drive. And so in this zig-zag journey they reached the destination he had planned, with Maryla in a state of complete enchantment. They had traversed miles on miles of winding roads and avenues strung with parks like blocks of malachite. Maryla could not believe that all the world held so much grace and splendor. Perry did not complicate the hypnotism with any attempt at flirtation or courtship. He studied her, and encouraged her delight. He neither corrected her mistakes nor patronized her. She felt amazingly at ease with him, old friends in an hour. At length when a swerve of the car flung her against him she ceased to edge away, and when he held her hand it never occurred to her that she should resist or resent.

They passed many inns of more or less attractive demeanor. If Aphra had been with him she would have selected the Abbey or Claremont, alleging the view as her excuse and rather considering the price.

Perry was afraid of Maryla's table-technique. He had no scruples against being seen in evil company, but he had a horror of gauchery. If he took her to a restaurant of degree she might make some slip that would amuse a waiter.

He had thought it all out. He had provided the properties for his little drama. He knew his New York well enough to know of a secluded spot where there was an abundance of scenery and a paucity of observation.

His chauffeur Groden stopped according to earlier instructions outside

Fort Washington Park, the dilapidated, neglected site where in the early days of the Revolution, Lords Howe, Cornwallis and Percy, and Knyphausen's conscript Hessians had stormed Fort Washington and captured Magaw and two thousand patriots while George Washington on the Palisades across the river watched the slaughter of his men, and wept.

Perry Merithew knew little of Washington and Maryla knew less, and there was no reminder of a battlefield in the woods. Groden took from the trunk-rack of the car a large hamper and carried it down the path and into the park.

It was a shabby park, discouraged with dust and begrimed with smoke from the occasional trains that shoot unseen through a narrow gorge. To Maryla it was wonderland and to Perry it was seclusion.

Companies of towering whitewood trees stood slenderly about. Paths wound through the ragged, unkempt grasses, littered in spots with old orange peels and paper bags, the disjected relics of former picnics. Rocks sprawled among the weeds. Across the gorge were other trees. Through foliage frames were vignettes of the mighty river and the solemn cliffside opposite.

Perry asked Maryla to choose her own table and she ran from nook to nook like a child let out of school. At last she chose a little plateau in the lee of a slanting boulder—and there the impatient Groden set down his hamper.

There were flowers—a few—very proper ones that kept early hours. They were already closing for the night.

Maryla ran about picking them, bending like a flower stem in the wind and laughing in little fluty tones that amused the drowsy birds gathering in the hope of crumbs and singing for their supper.

"How many, many flowers there are!" Maryla said. "Millions there are. And me so proud of my one little geranium. It's a pity these should be wasted. They should grow in town. What country is this we are in now?"

"This is New York City still," said Perry indulgently.

"Always New York!" she gasped. "What a wanderfool city. And it has

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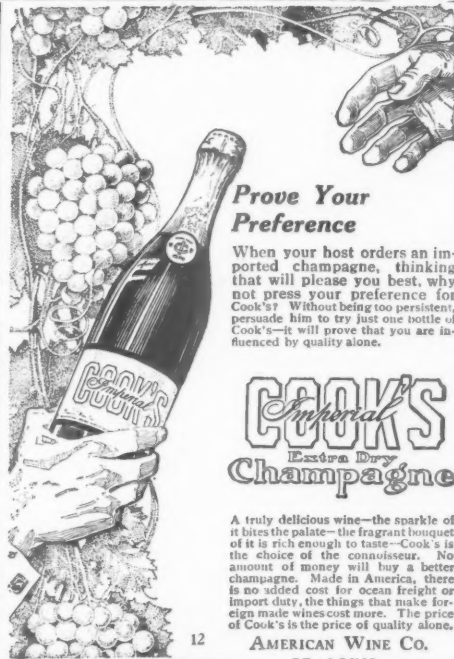
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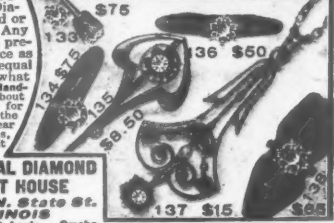


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birds in it. I have a bird at home. Listen to those little fallers!" She looked up into the branches. "Hallo, hallo, little faller, go on sing some more yet. See the fat one, he's goin' to bust singing so hard. My poor little bird is into a cage. When I go home, I'll let him free. There they go—good-by, good luck! good luck! What river is that? The Hudson? Oh, such a big river. Pasinski says it goes to the sea. Did you ever see the sea?"

Perry modestly admitted this distinction. She shook her head in awe of him.

"I didn't know the world was such a beautiful city. It must have been some place like this where Moses was when Yahveh lifted him up to a high place. I tell you, a person had ought to be terrible good in such a beautiful world, don't you think?"

"A person had ought to be happy in such a beautiful world."

"But they couldn't be happy if they didn't be good, could they?"

"Well, I've never been good, but I've usually been happy."

"Oh, you! you are the best man that ever was. So kind to me—I can't understand—understand it."

"That's selfishness: it makes me happy to be with you."

"Does it!—truly?"

Perry could have said more, but Groden was everywhere and Groden's look was annoying. He had taken from the hamper a linen cloth and spread it on the grass, and set out plates and dishes and silver. There were split chickens and salad and sweets, hot coffee in a vacuum container and cold water in another, and two little bottles with gilded necks in a small bucket of ice.

Maryla loved nature, but art was nature plus humanity and she was recalled from the landscape by the wizardry of that basketed feast. Groden moved about in ironic silence save for the pleasant clink of plates and silver. When he had set the board, Merithew told him to take the car to the Abbey and get his own dinner, then to come back and wait outside the park.

Groden vanished in the wilderness and seemed to take a load off Merithew's

mind. Perry regained youth from Maryla's youthfulness and motioned her to a place, then dropped to the ground Turk fashion opposite.

He tossed her a napkin, whose sheer-ness gave her a thrill of delight. She tucked it under her chin, and when he offered her a plate of roasted chicken, she took a drumstick in her fingers and made ready to gnaw.

Then to her horror she saw that Perry had not tucked his napkin under his chin, but had set it on his knee. As secretly as she could she drew hers from her throat and folded it back and put it on her lap.

He parted his chicken with a knife and fork and she corrected her own attack. She began to criss-cross cut her lettuce with her knife and fork till she saw that he dispensed with the knife. Then she tried to mimic him, but the lettuce was elusive and she had to hunt it all across her plate and over the edge and back again.

The sky grew darker and warmer in color. The west was leagues of roses. Perry twisted the wire from one of the little bottles and unscrewed the cork. An eager froth came clattering forth into the glass he held. He passed it to Maryla, and filled himself a glass, raised it and said:

"Here's to your big eyes, Miss Just Only Maryla."

"Oh, thank you," she giggled.

"But you're not drinking."

She put the glass to her lips and started back before the tiny bombardment. "What is it?" she said.

"Champagne."

"I don't think I'd better take any tshempen. Papa might not like it."

"Papa isn't here. This is my party."

"Thank you, but better I didn't."

"To please me."

"Well, to please you." She closed her eyes and braved a sip, only to recoil from the brim with a grimace. "Ugh, it tastes like a paper of needles."

"It improves with acquaintance. Try again."

"Yes sir—if you say so. You should tell me when to stop." She took another sip. Already it was better and a look of regret came into his eyes.

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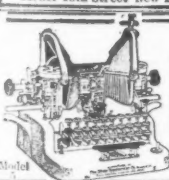
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"Shall I take more?" she asked, expecting assent.

"No," he said, and took the glass from her, and poured it on the ground. He was amazed at himself and said: "I'll empty mine—here." He quaffed it off. They talked as they scoured their plates in extravagant felicity.

When they had made a great feast of the slender fare, she folded up the things and packed them in the hamper. He smoked and watched her and found her singularly graceful, singularly interesting.

Through the final crimson a sailboat almost becalmed was drifting like a huge white moth at rest under closed wings.

"Look!" Maryla whispered. "See the ship!"

"It's a sloop," said Perry. "It's about the build of mine."

"You have a whole ship of your own?" she marveled. "Are you a steamboat captain?"

He shook his head and then she asked: "Where do you work?"

He laughed: "I don't."

She could not seem to understand this. He explained: "I just have my boat to loaf round in. Would you like to go sailing in it some day?"

"Oh, I'd love it—some Sunday when I'm not working."

"What if you didn't work any more?"

"I've got to."

"Not if you — not if you — I don't want you to work any more, Maryla. I need you myself."

She wrinkled her brows and smiled in a look of quaint perplexity:

"I don't understand."

"Maryla, I want you to live with me."

She had thought that nothing could be more wonderful than the wonders she had seen this day. But she had grown so used to miracles that it seemed quite credible that a demi-god should stoop to conquer her and make her his bride.

"You mean you—you mean we should get married?" she whispered in wide-eyed rapture.

"Naturally," he answered, baffled a little by the deifying look she fastened on him. In later days his conscience sought refuge in that word "naturally" as a kind of ghastly pun.

"But for why—for why should you like me, when so many fi-ne ladies are in the world?"

"Because I—I'm simply crazy about you, child. You fascinate me. You make the world all new and young again. I never met anybody like you. You don't know anything, do you? But you're—you're so different. I—I'm crazy about you, that's all. I'm just crazy about you."

Maryla shuddered into his arm with a laughing ecstasy:

"And me—I am crazy about you."

By now the moon was pouring from the East her silver into the red West. The two lights filled everything with a kind of witchery of altruism, a melting tender-heartedness, an aversion from harsh words, protests, denials. It was the hour of rose and azure when the people draw close together against the night, when the eyes are blindfolded by the universal dusk and hands grope out in loneliness and voices sink to whispers. The breeze itself was a whisper, and it had an irresistible persuasiveness.

Merithew found Maryla's hands. They were cold. She shivered a little and when he drew her closer she did not oppose him. When he whispered, "Kiss me, Maryla," though she whimpered, "Oh, no, no, please," she did not fight away from him. He kissed her cold cheek and it seemed to grow suddenly warm beneath his lips.

He murmured: "I love you." He had used the word so often, so recklessly, that he knew all the uses of it. But it was almost new to her, entirely new from such a wooer as he. She believed him.

When he whispered, "Love me, Maryla," she loved him. When he demanded, "Kiss me, Maryla," she took pride in her meekness, and obeyed him.

The sky belonged to the moon; the world was the moon's world. Among the pleached boughs of the lofty tulip trees the moon was like a distant lamp behind a lattice. There was no hint of humankind about except on the distant river where a few boats moved dreamily, their lights pouring rubies and emeralds into the river with Cleopatra's wantonness.

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steamed north like a dragon in gleaming scales. People were dancing on the deck and the music came across the water as with dew upon it. But at the head of the boat was a big searchlight that swept the hills and clouds and all the scene for the amusement or instruction of the passengers.

The inconceivable swiftness and scope of its revelation terrified Maryla, who had never heard of it. To her it was like a dark lantern carried by a giant watchman. Her soul seemed to hear the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the evening and calling to Eve hidden amongst the trees of the garden.

She did not take to herself the solace of blaming the serpent, but she felt that her brief term in Eden was over.

The boat forged on up the river and gave back the darkness, but the moon was not the same.

Then suddenly the quietude and the solitude were ruined again, cloven asunder as with a sword. A railroad train ripped through the gorge at their feet. It went by unseen, but it sent out a shower of sparks, and a shrill escape of steam like the great hiss of an indignant world.

CHAPTER XVII.

I

THAT same night that same moon poured its mellow influence upon a distant nickel-plated yacht steaming handsomely through an appropriately nickel-plated sea.

Jacob Schuyler had thought himself immensely clever when he devised the scheme of checkmating his runaway daughter by kidnaping her. A small joke of his own usually lasted him a good while, and it pleased him to shanghai his own child in his yacht. But the humor had lost something of its edge, in the course of a week at sea, especially since Muriel would not laugh. Also Jacob had begun to think hard about his business and to distrust his subordinates. His wife was remembering a number of necessities that she had neglected in the

haste of their departure. Neither her maid nor Muriel's had a sea-going stomach; and of all tasks on earth old Mrs. Schuyler least enjoyed waiting on her own maid. But Jacob had vowed not to go back until Muriel promised to give up her slum avocations. She set that little square jaw of hers—a misses' size model of his own—and vowed that she would never make such a promise. It was a case of vow against vow, and whose was the frailer?

Meanwhile nobody on that pleasure yacht was having any pleasure. Nobody could convince anybody of anything. Jacob and his wife could not persuade their child that they were acting for her best interests, and she could not persuade them to mind their own.

To-night the moon and the soft gale pleaded for reconciliation, but Muriel would not surrender. The old people, grown somewhat to a dumpling shape, sat bunched in their steamer chairs and watched that slim figure in the blown skirts leaning on the rail, her eyes clinging to the horizon like hands reluctant to let go.

Her parents watched her so fondly that they saw even the dim little tears that came forth and glistened on her eyelashes. Jacob called to her with the kindliness the moon inspired:

"What's the matter, honey?"

"Nothing, nothing, thank you."

"But you're crying, aren't you?"

"Not necessarily."

"I thought I saw tears in your eyes."

"It's the wind, I suppose; or the spray."

The old people looked at each other without turning their heads. Mrs. Schuyler tried her luck: "What are you thinking of, dearest?"

"Of nothing that interests you."

"Perhaps it would."

Muriel left the rail and flung herself into her own chair:

"No! You have no hearts, either of you. My suffering doesn't interest you!"

That dealt them a stab indeed, the sharper than a serpent's stab of a thankless child. They left off asking her what she was thinking about. So she told them:

"I was thinking of what that poor



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Italian mother must feel in that awful tenement, wondering where her child is. And I was thinking of the child crying with fear and loneliness. And you wont let me go and find him."

"We love you too well to let you mix yourself in these things."

"Love me!—and you break my heart. You make a brute of me, and a fool and a liar. You force me to abandon all those wretched people that trusted me."

"We're sorry for the poor souls, of course, my dear," Jacob urged. "How often have I told you that the last thing I did was to telephone Chivot to do what he could."

"Chivot!" she sniffed, and there was his epitaph in the sniff.

"Can't you understand, honey," Jacob pleaded, "that we're only guided by our love of you? We can't endure the thought of your going down in those hideous regions."

"They're not hideous. They're crowded, but so is a summer hotel. People are people there as well as anywhere."

"But it's not safe for you."

"Safe! Where is it safe? In this world or the next? If I'm never to go anywhere or do anything that isn't safe, I might as well jump overboard."

"But suppose while you were trying to find that kidnaped boy, somebody kidnapped you?"

"Oh Lord, Papa, don't! don't!—you're not old enough for second childishness. You talk of the East Side as if it were the Wild West in dime novel days."

"Of course I do," said Jacob. "It's worse than Cripple Creek ever was. Those gun-men down there would shoot the spurs off a cowboy bad-man before he could draw his cayuse, or whatever it is they shoot with out there."

Muriel shook her head over the nursery ogre-story.

"Oh, Daddy, Daddy, naughty, naughty!"

"I mean it," said Jacob angrily. "The papers are full of gun-play every day, but they don't tell a tenth of it. The police don't want it on their records, and the papers wont print every bit of pop-gun practice at one of those obscure

dance halls or gin-mills. The people they kill or maim are nobody much anyway. But the hospitals can tell you a story. I'm on the board of two or three of 'em and I get the reports. Hardly a night passes without eight or ten brought in stabbed or shot or beaten up. Those Pike County and Black Hills fellows were nothing compared to New York. They didn't have people enough to shoot. New York is simply full of gun-men and knife-men and bomb-throwers."

"That makes it all the more interesting," said Muriel with the gaiety of youth at the hint of adventure.

Jacob opened his mouth with a gasp, then clamped it on his cigar and spoke through his clenched teeth like a proper pirate:

"We'll, Mother, if that's the way she feels about it, we might as well head for Europe. I'll go arrange it with Björölin."

He slapped his hands on the arms of his chair and heaved himself erect with difficulty. He marched out as he had done when a board of directors would not vote as he wished and he left them dazed and disorganized to surrender and recall him.

Muriel was a bit dazed and disorganized herself. Ordinarily she had won her way in her conflicts with her father. Was she losing her grip?

Then her mother began on her:

"Really, Muriel, you treat your father shamefully. Of course I know that respect for parents is absolutely lacking in American children nowadays. All the foreigners speak of it. But—"

"They were speaking of it when you were a child, too, Mother darling," Muriel purred.

Mrs. Schuyler quivered as she wore round on another tack:

"The thing that alarms your father and me is that it's a Black Hand affair. You simply must not interfere in that. Even the police are helpless. The Mafia killed Petrosino himself. There's no telling where they'll bob up."

"But, Mother dear, they only fight among themselves. They have no feud against us."

"Oh, haven't they! How about my sister's experience in Westchester County. Did they kill the paymaster on

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that new building next to her place, or didn't they? They shot him on his motorcycle and he kept alive just long enough to ride into her gates and die on her lawn. Did they ever find the murderers?—No! And poor Doctor Pelton—didn't they threaten to kill him if he didn't leave three thousand dollars in that old tree? The policemen traced them just in time. Now I implore you not to oppose your father. He doesn't want to go to Europe now, and heaven knows I can't bear the idea. But you're both so stubborn, you are killing me between you."

Muriel's resolution was unshaken:

"I'm sorry, Mother. There's no place I want to go less than to Europe. But I'd rather go to Africa than be bullied like this. I'm of age and I won't be treated as a little girl. All I want to do is to furnish the money for the poor Angelillo mother to pay over to those kidnapers. I'm not going to interfere in their feuds."

In her desperation Mrs. Schuyler had an inspiration:

"How do you know the whole thing isn't a trap and those two women the ringleaders of the—the gang?"

"Oh, Mother!"

Like other large bodies Mrs. Schuyler gained momentum astoundingly:

"I don't for a moment believe they have lost any boy at all. I'm perfectly sure they never had a boy to lose."

"Really, Mother, you mustn't go crazy right before my eyes."

Mrs. Schuyler did not mind the sarcasm. She returned it:

"Oh, everybody's crazy but the young. But you'd better acquire a little of the common insanity of the rest of the grown-ups. Don't become eccentric, my child, whatever else you do. I'd almost rather have you fast than a crank. Fast people do reform sometimes, but cranks get worse and worse."

Muriel stared at her mother with all the disappointment children feel when their parents fall short of their ideals. Muriel thought: "Poor child!"

Her mother said: "Poor child! I'm going to bed. Good-night."

They kissed each other formally like

women at war, and Mrs. Schuyler went to her cabin. The boat was rolling so that she progressed with a rather bibulous dignity. The moonlight seemed to be relieved when she took her cynical counsels away from its altruism.

Muriel went back to the railing and resumed her study of the horizon. It seemed a pity that she should be alone and all that moonlight going to waste. But she was thinking of a young man, the young physician. She was thinking, "What is he thinking of me?" She felt sure that if he were thinking of her, it was with bitter resentment.

II

HE was thinking of her and musing: "Is she thinking of me?" He was afraid that she had forgotten him as utterly as she had neglected him. He was looking at the same moon and wondering where she was.

Young Doctor Worthing had more than amorous reasons for asking information as to Muriel Schuyler's whereabouts. The first time she had made an appointment with him she had not kept it and he had been hurt and angry. But she had telephoned several hours later and explained that her father had prevented her. The second time she had been very late, and he had been amused. She had arrived with an armload of apologies. She had promised to telephone him the following day. It was a long long day with double the usual number and length of hours, but she did not telephone. Nor did she call, or write, or make any sign. He had hung about Bellevue Hospital all day and half the night in the assurance that she would call him up. Night came and no call. The next morning there was no call.

"It's just a way she has," he pleaded to himself in her behalf. And she had such attractive ways that even this fault became a charm because it was hers.

The second morning he was both hurt and alarmed. About noon he was sent for. The messenger could not pronounce the name of the visitor, but he called him a "wop." Worthing went down to the reception room and was greeted with devotion by a man he had never seen.

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Worthing knew him for an Italian, first by his trousers, which were too tight, too low in the waist and too high at the ankles. He was fat and huge and his skin was like currant jelly. There were traces of flour in his hair, and his finger nails were snowed up with flour. He seemed to be disappointed at finding Worthing in the white uniform of an interne. He said:

"I wanna see Meester Doctor Vorteen."

"I am Doctor Worthing."

"Oh! ah! Please to meet. My name 'Angelec'—bakery is my beesaness. My boy been keedanop—you know?"

"Oh, yes—Mr. Angelillo, I know."

"Two day 'go you call wit' de nice yong ladde, I am honing for my boy; so I no see you. But my wife say you are so good you say you geeva de mawney for buy my boy back. I go hont avery place for find the man vat steal dose chile. I find man who say maybe he know somebody who know somebody. He comes back and say he cannot find nobody. Better I print in the *Araldo*. So I put in paper—wanna t'ousan' dollar for my boy."

"But I said to start it at five hundred." Dr. Worthing protested.

"*Si, si*. Your fi' hondred; but me, I have fi' hondred more. It is all I can get."

"Why didn't you wait?"

"Ah, my wife she is wait so long! She is cry so hard! My leetla son—it seem long, long time to heem."

Worthing understood. He put his hand on the big shoulder already quaking with threatened sobs.

"All right," he said. "Did you get any answer?"

"To-day my telephone rings. Man says—Italian man says: 'For four t'ousan' dollar, you getta de boy back, notta de wan damn cent smaller.' I says, 'Please, I cannot get so moch mawney!' He says, 'You cannot getta de boy.' I says, 'Wait a minuto.' *Click!* telephone is stop, man gone. I say to telephone girl 'Queeck, where is dat las' number.' She says, she doan' know."

"The police could make them hunt it up."

Mr. Angelillo's opinion of the police

was expressed in a grimace of contempt. He explained that police meddling only endangered the boy's life. He referred to some man who had been annoying him with detectives. He described Mr. Chivot in a way that Muriel would have called portraiture. But Worthing had never seen Chivot.

Angelillo got Chivot's name fairly well but it meant nothing to Worthing, who had never heard of Jacob Schuyler's secretary.

Angelillo outlined his plan: "Police is no good. Plaina clothes is no good. Italiano most catch Italiano. First is de boy; to get my boy back to his mawther, I pay all what is ask of mawney. After, I find out who is keedanop my boy. I keel him—so!"

He drove an imaginary stiletto into an imaginary body with the greatest enthusiasm.

"When he is keel, I take back my mawney and yours, and I pay you again what you geeve. See?"

He smiled at the ingenious device. When Worthing hemmed with embarrassment, he went on:

"All I aska you is lenda me t'ree t'ousan' fi' hondred dollar for wan, two days. I geeve all back so soon I get my boy and keela dat damn skonk."

Worthing was quite convinced that if capital punishment were ever justified it was warranted in the case of child-stealing, but he was not enthusiastic over the scheme for securing the return of Miss Schuyler's money.

Still, he remembered that she had been willing, even eager, to pay over the entire five thousand dollars that she had secured from Perry Merithew. He urged Angelillo to make one more effort to lower the demand, and he tried to make him promise to leave the revenge to the police. Angelillo left him with some waning of enthusiasm, saying that he would return the next day.

Dr. Worthing felt that Muriel would want to learn the news. It was an excellent excuse for an interview. He telephoned the town house, and was told that she was on a yacht cruise. Incredible of such desertion, he telephoned the country place. The astounding fact was confirmed. She had put to sea for an

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indefinite period without sending him a word!

It never occurred to him that the yacht would carry a wireless installation. If it had occurred to him, he would have felt sure that she would use it herself. She knew his address well enough.

He was horrified at her indifference. He could only explain it on the ground that her interest in the poor had been a mere flicker of a rich woman's restlessness.

It had amused her to play with rag dolls for a few days; then they had become tedious, as poverty always does, and she had dropped them for more expensive toys.

Probably some super-rich lover or some visiting nobleman was engaging her thoughts with glittering courtship. Perhaps she was making a funny story of her little slumming-excursion and the hospital interne she had dazzled for a few days just to see how foolish he would be.

Doctors must learn to deaden their feelings or they will perish. Worthing had learned to be calm under bitter ordeals. But Muriel had stabbed him in a chamber of his heart that had never been anesthetized, and he could not put his wincing soul into the twilight sleep.

This dull, gnawing neuritis of the heart was not his only distress. She had involved him in the affair of the kidnapped child. In his first bitterness he said to himself that she and her errands could go hang. She had made a messenger boy of him, but he would not wear the cap when the wages ceased.

He was so busied with ambulance calls and extra hospital work on account of a big factory fire followed by a collision of two elevated trains, that he let his problems lie fallow.

Two days later Angelillo sought him out again. He had published another bid in the *Araldo*, and in the dismal auction with unseen bidders had brought the price of the boy down to three thousand dollars.

Angelillo had called for the money. Worthing stared at him in open-jawed confusion. All the man wanted was twenty-five hundred dollars in cash. Worthing's total war-fund amounted to

about twenty-five. He was of the type and age that counts youth as assets in the bank and immediate cash as mere installment money for incurring liabilities.

Angelillo mistook the reason of Worthing's embarrassment. He opened out his palm and rubbed his thumb across his finger tips in the money-gesture and smiled:

"Eet ees all right. You lenda me twenta-fi' hond'. I pay. I grabba de boy; den I stabba de man. See—like-a so! Ugh! And I nabba de mon'!"

There was all of sunny Italy in his smile. Worthing had a feeling that if he did not furnish the money, Mr. Angelillo would just as amiably push the stiletto into him. It was not fear, however, so much as downright shame that confused him—that and a ferocious rage at Muriel for reducing him to this contemptible predicament and leaving the stolen boy as the victim of this nauseous joke.

He could only temporize. Angelillo's smile was growing tired and anxious. Worthing had a sudden idea that Muriel might have come back. He would telephone again.

"I—well, I haven't the money with me, of course," he stammered. "Mr. Angelililil—" He wondered how many "lils" there were in the name. He floundered on. "If you'll come back to-morrow—"

"To-morrow?" Angelillo muttered. "I tella de man I getta de mawney deesa day. I tella my wife our Filippo be home for hees dinner to-night."

"I'm sorry," said Worthing. "I'll try to get it to you this afternoon. I will if I can. That's all I can say. I will if I can. I'll bring it to you."

Angelillo studied him with suspicion. But his disappointment overwhelmed his anger. His big eyes and their lashes were so black that his tears seemed like ink. He nodded and turned away. Worthing stared at his shuffling form and envied him his tears.

He made haste to telephone Muriel's home again, the country place, and even Schuyler's office. Everywhere he had the same answer. Mr. Schuyler was taking a much needed vacation on his yacht and his address was unknown.



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Worthing could not devise a suitable explanation to the Angelillo family for the hoax. He had promised to take the money, but he feared the eyes of the two women more than the knife of the father. He simply kept away from the hospital and from the Batavia Street home of the Angelilli. For two days he ignored the telephone messages and the scrawled notes of Angelillo and managed to evade him when he called.

Two days later Angelillo, who had lain in wait for him, caught him on the street. The father was wild with wrath and half mad with alarm. He would have killed the doctor without a qualm save that he would have killed his only hope. He clung to Worthing's coat with big fat hands and blubbered:

"For w'y you don't see me, don't tella me w'at to do? For w'y you come to my home and say, 'I geeva de mawney for your Filippo?' For w'y you tella me in ospedale you goin' breeng me da mawney and no breenga? For w'y, huh?"

Then as sometimes happens to people in desperate embarrassment, Worthing had resort to the last resort of too clever people, the truth. And as sometimes happens, the truth cleared the air somewhat and found credence and sympathy.

He told the poor father how he had been brought into the affair and how he had been deceived by the same pretty-faced glib promiser. He told all but her name. When Angelillo pleaded for that, he said:

"I can't tell you. It wouldn't do any good. She's out of town." And then the fantastic notion came to him. "I don't believe she told me her real name."

After all, what evidence had he that the girl was Muriel Schuyler. He had found her with a car marked J. S. but that proved nothing. She might have been a maid, or a picked-up sweetheart of the chauffeur's. In his anger he twisted all the arguments awry, and everything proved what he hated to have it prove.

His meekness and frankness and his grief were so complete that Angelillo had mercy on him, forgave him, and resolved to go back to fight his battle in his own way.

He took from his pocket a dirty en-

velope and from that a sheet of cheap note-paper on which was printed a message in Italian. In it was a little curl of black hair.

"Dey senda me dees," he explained. "Eet is Filippo's hairs. Dey say, eef no mawney come to-night, to-morrow dey senda me." — he paused and breathed hard, — "dey senda me de leetla finger from his left hand by parcel posto. And de nex' day—*ancor' uno digitto.*" The anguish on his face changed to unimaginable ire. "Eef dey do, by de body of Cristo, wan day I find deir boy and I do de same."

The fierce liquor of revenge sustained him as he turned away. Worthing returned to the hospital and when he went out on the next ambulance call he was so rough with a bruised drunkard that the bystanders threatened to report him.

The next morning he had a telephone message from the Assistant Commissioner on Ellis Island asking him if Miss Schuyler had done anything about the appeal against the deportation of the Balinski girl. Nothing had been turned in, and the time was short.

Worthing answered with a griding laugh:

"Hah! She fooled you too, did she?"

"I don't understand."

"Neither do I. Good-by!"

Misery loves company, and the Assistant Commissioner was welcome.

III


TEN days after Muriel's disappearance, Doctor Worthing was called out to bring in the shredded victims of a dynamite accident in the Broadway Subway construction. He came back with a wagon-load of horrors and turned them over to a squad of surgeons and nurses.

When he had washed up and changed to his street clothes, he was told that a young lady was waiting to see him. It was Muriel.

She rose and hurried to him with a little cry of delight that broke off short before the fierce anger of his glare.

"Didn't you get my telegram?" she asked.

"What telegram?" he groaned: she was so pretty it was a pity she was false.



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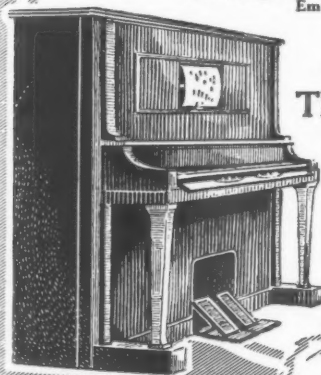
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"The one I gave the porter. He swore he'd send it. I hadn't time to send it myself and catch the train. I'll murder that black hound if I ever see him again."

Worthing tossed his head impatiently. Another of her stories was coming. It came. She told him of the tyranny of her atrocious father. She told him of her efforts to get word to him, to bribe a sailor, the wireless operator, anybody to send him word.

They anchored now and then in various harbors while sailors were sent ashore for mail and newspapers and supplies. She tried to escape at every one, but the guard was too strict.

"They never went in close enough for me to swim, though, or I'd have tried it. The other day—it was my last chance, too—we were off Newport News, and the next stop was Europe. I caught a glimpse of a warship there, and the Lord sent me a stroke of genius. Father and mother were playing *bézique*; the launch was ashore, and most of the sailors asleep. I went into the navigation room and found where it tells you about signal codes and things, and I got out the necessary pennants and made up a signal for 'Mutiny on Board; Send Help.'

"Nobody paid any particular attention to me, so long as I was in plain view. I used to putter about the deck a good deal to learn the ropes. I generally ran up the colors and lowered them. So I made up a hoist and raised it and nobody on the yacht noticed it. Nobody on the warship noticed it either, for the longest time.

"Then there was a sign of life on board and a lot of pointing. Finally I saw a cutter leaving her side. So I strolled up to my darling old Dad and told him what I had done.

"He almost exploded. I told him that I was going to report that the yacht was engaged in the slave-carrying trade, and that I was the slave, white, of age, unmarried, and American, and I was being dragged away by force. So I had a right to call a policeman or a warship or the whole United States army.

"Well, Father was ready to die. He loathes publicity, anyway, and he could see tons of it coming his way. I told him I would save him from every last smitch

of trouble if he'd solemnly swear to quit trying to bully me, and let me go ashore.

"He had nothing else to do, so he swore. Then when the cutter came alongside, I met the officer and treated him as if I were very much surprised. He asked what the trouble was and I told him that everybody was well and happy—why? He explained about the signals and I pretended to be ready to drop. I told him it was all my fault. I'd had been getting up a little birthday dinner and I wanted to dress the ship. I had a lot of other flags I wanted to fly, and those were the first I found. We had to muster the crew to convince him that everything was all right. Then I begged him to have tea—and he did. He was terribly disappointed at not being able to save anybody, but he was awfully nice—and very good looking."

She eyed Worthing closely to see if there were no jealousy in him. He was grimly trying to believe the evidently concocted romance. He did not want to be jealous of an imaginary male beauty. He was icily insolent before her smile.

She was canny enough to see that his head was having a battle with his heart. She said:

"Could I bribe you to smile once for five thousand dollars?"

She produced the cash and spread it out before him. It was not stage-money. If that were real, perhaps the rest of her story was. He stared into her eyes and saw nothing there but truth—though she had just finished telling him a story of her ingenious lies. But they, of course, didn't count against her—for they were told in order to get back to him.

When she saw that he had relented, she went on with her story of hasty escape from the yacht. She would not wait to come back on it, but dashed ashore and just caught a home-bound train. She described the telegram she had written, and reiterated her desire to murder the porter who pocketed the money, tip and all.

She talked at a lightning express speed, and ended with a final rush like pulling into a station:

"And now tell me everything that's happened. I was so afraid about the poor Angelillo boy. Did Mr. Chivot accom-



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plish anything? Of course not, but—oh, do tell me! You haven't said a word."

He told her what he knew of the kidnapped boy's affairs and he told her what he dreaded.

She was afire with terror and insisted on leaving at once for the Angelillo home. Worthing was not in a position to act upon his impulses as she on hers, but he managed to compound an excuse that satisfied his chief and they set out together for Batavia Street.

They spoke again of Happy Hanigan, the crooked little waif who had brought them together out of the multitudes. Once more they decided that his case must wait and the Balinski appeal must wait till the Angelillo child was rescued, if indeed he were not already maimed or killed.

As they whirled into Batavia Street, where automobiles are not frequent, they came within an ace of smiting Happy Hanigan again.

He leapt to the curb in time and began to howl profanity.

"Where to hell youse goin'? You—say! is dat you, Miss Schuyler? Well, I'll be—scuse me."

His goblin wrath had changed instantly to a smile that would have been almost too sweet for a cherub; but his language preserved its habits.

Muriel hastened to get down from the car and embrace her long lost protégé. Happy winked across her shoulder at Worthing and said:

"Hey, Doc, toin your head de udder way. Don't you know how to act when a feller meets his goil?"

Worthing tried to smile, but Happy read his look aright: "Looky at him, darlin'; he's green wit' chealousness."

Muriel surprised the blush that ran across Worthing's face. Then one ran across her own. Then she became intensely interested in Happy's condition. He told her that he was fine, but his gait was eloquent of pain, and his mother, whom they found on the wooden side-wise stoop, shook her head over him and though her greeting was full of pious thanks, her eyes poured tears down the runnels of her many-wrinkled cheeks.

Muriel understood and patted the little old hand and said:

"We want to talk to you about Happy. Doctor Worthing knows a way to make your poor boy straight and strong, and we're coming up to see you just as soon as we've had a little talk with Mrs. Angelillo about her boy."

"God's fresh blessing about you!" said Mrs. Hanigan, and watched Muriel flashing up the dingy stairway, an angel fresh from heaven in robes fresh from Paris.

WHEN Muriel entered the Angelillo cavern, she was first stared at with superstitious unbelief and then glared at with superstitious recognition. They laid upon her shoulders the blame for the ills that preceded her first arrival in their life as well as those that followed. They accused her of the Evil Eye, the cruelest folly that has survived from the old demonic lore.

They made the sign of protection against the Jettatura and motioned her away. Worthing had prepared her for such a reception and she had composed in the back of her head a little apology in her best Italian.

She reeled it off now and won past their wrath. The most convincing sign of all was the brandishing of the actual money. She allowed them to touch those almost omnipotent green wafers and they recognized the uncanny power of the dollar as an amulet against misfortune.

Gemma told Muriel that her father was away from home on his everlasting hunt for his boy. He had put off the kidnapers from day to day on pretext upon pretext, promising to pay, and devising excuse after excuse for delay, and struggling to uncover some trace of his tormentors. They kept in close touch with him, yet as vaguely as if from some wireless station in mid-ocean. They too were frantic with impatience, but had not yet killed or maimed the boy, for he was their only weapon, their only hope.

Learning that the father would not be back for two hours, Muriel and Worthing determined to take Happy Hanigan to the great surgeon whose new operation promised to straighten his twisted spine. Gemma and her mother dreaded to lose Muriel again, but she



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promised to return, and seeing that Gemma's grimy little baby was fascinated by one of her diamond rings, she left that as hostage.

As soon as Muriel had gone, Gemma's husband showed an inclination to borrow the diamond ring and see how much he could win with it. But Gemma displayed an amazing disloyalty to her lord and master and threatened him with a bread-knife.

IV

GEMMA'S husband was an Italian of the type that has no Italian feature. At home his name was Nunzio Mangianello; abroad he called himself "Mike Kelley" for short. He was of a basking nature and before he married Gemma had been content to borrow a street piano and play the troubadour for a day or two, earning enough to keep him alive the rest of the week. He had slept upon green bananas, aiding them to ripen with his own nature.

He had easily won the green banana soul of Gemma, then had settled down as a basker in the Angelillo home. What little he earned now he spent in gambling, preferably at the noble game of stuss—a game which some anonymous genius improved with "viggresh," a wonderful feature: the house pays back to each player one tenth of his stakes, thus assuring to the man who has lost his entire fortune, a large enough percentage to pay his car-fare home. This encourages the timid gambler to risk everything in the calm certainty that he can never be entirely wiped out.

The stuss-house which Nunzio chiefly honored with his patronage was more or less concealed in Allen Street, and presided over with more or less police permission by "Shang" Ganley, one of the most ambitious gun-men of the East Side. And this gun-man's more or less official wife was the versatile little brick-topped imp generally known as "Red Ida."

Nunzio had poured into their sympathetic ears his first grief at the kidnapping of his tiny brother-in-law Filippo. He had been sincerely grieved by the loss of the little fellow and moved

the gun-man and Red Ida to facile tears.

He had moved them to cheers when he told them of the wealthy young lady who came in with heavenly funds, but he had not been able to tell her name.

When Muriel disappeared her treachery was mourned in the stuss-house and voted a dirty trick. And now that she had come back Nunzio could hardly possess his soul in patience till the chance came to take the splendid news to his sympathetic friends in Allen Street.

Red Ida was at home when he arrived, and she was as delighted as if the stolen child were her own.

She was consumed with anxiety as to the name of the rich "dame." She was willing to bet that if she laid eyes on her she'd know who she was. She was not only a close student of the society columns and the picture supplements in which women of wealth rival actresses and politicians in the frequency of their appearance, but also Ida was a singer in the cabarets where at times the aristocracy condescended to dine and even to dance.

Only the night before when she sang at one of the countless restaurants devoted to Chinese dishes she had recognized Merry Perry Merithew at one of the tables with a "lady friend" who was not the well known Aphra Shaler.

The "lady friend" was Maryla, whom Perry was gradually educating up to the better restaurants. He had not yet educated her up to the maxixe but her somber beauty and her childlike wonder at the tritest things—these still enthralled him. Also she was glowing with the bliss of wearing that wonderful gown from Paris via Dutilh's.

Maryla had watched Red Ida with amazement as the little demon leaned against the piano in the middle of the crowded tables and sang a highly moral song with this refrain of unusually keen philosophy:

Daon't blay-mit tall on Broar-dway
Yew have yewself to blame.
Daon't shame the name of dear aold
Broar-dway
For in any other town it's (gulp)
just the same.
Yewr life is whawt yew may-kit,
When yew try to toin nigh tin tew
day,

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And if yew should be dineeng with a
lit-til stran-jar,
Red lights seem tew warn yew of a
dan-jar,
Daon't blay-mit tall on Broar-dway!

Perry Merithew was bored by this didactic lyric, in which Maryla found deep solemnities. He found more pleasure in the encore, a more Ida-esque satire on a young man who took his girl out for a bright evening and bought her an ice cream soda, winning from her this withering comment:

If that's your idear of a wonderful time
Take me home!
You came out with a one-dollar bill,
You've got eighty cents left of it still,
If that's your idear of a wonderful time,
Take me home!

That was not Perry Merithew's idea of a wonderful time, but even Red Ida could see that he was having difficulty in spending much money on Maryla. As Red Ida muttered to her semi-simian accompanist during his "vamp till ready:—"

"Say, Oinest, pipe Merry Perry with his noo skoit. She's about as much fun as a Sallivation Army weep-fest. I wish to Gawd I had a chance at one of them free spenders."

Ida recognized a kindred spirit in Merry Perry. In spite of all the differences between them, there was a curious sympathy in their attitudes toward life. Both of them were industrious in mischief and were fascinated only by the forbidden. Between Maryla and Ida there were gulfs of distance, though both were what the world labels bad.

The next day, Red Ida was telling her gun-man consort of Perry Merithew's waste of cash and courtesy. Shang Ganley was a very liberal minded man and made no petty objections to his wife's extramural adventures.

And then Nunzio appeared with the sensational news of the re-appearance of the millionairess and her amazing display of thousand-dollar bills and diamonds.

TRADE was dull in the stuss line that afternoon, and when Nunzio spoke of Muriel's promise to return at three o'clock, Red Ida and her man decided to stroll down to Batavia Street and give her a look-over.

A recent earthquake in the catacombs of the gambling world had combined with a political revolution to rob the life of the professional gambler of its placid security. Business was bad and suckers were timorous.

Ida's husband had been growling about the perfection of the Italian Black Hand syndicates and their ability to wring thousands of dollars from apparent paupers by the arts of bomb-placing, child-stealing, and horse-poisoning.

It seemed a shameful lack of American enterprise to leave this rich field to the wops. Shang had been mulling over in his mind a campaign against the children of some of the rich. When the brilliant visions of cocaine danced before him he talked sometimes of invading the upper regions of the New York Eldorado. And now the rich daughter of a Fifth Avenue plutocrat was loitering about just waiting for somebody to gather her in.

As he and his Ida sauntered down the crowded lanes that lead to Batavia Street his brain was shuffling schemes so dazzling that he dared not mention them even to so audacious a sprite as Ida.

They found their way to Batavia Street, and eventually a motor rolled up and emitted a young man who helped out a young woman.

Red Ida knew her instantly from her numberless pictures in the newspapers. She seized her man by his forearm and whispered:

"My Gawd, that's Muriel Schuyler. Her old man's worth a billion dollars."

In the stormy brain-cells of the gun-man, there forthwith rose a challenging question:

"Why not?"

The next installment of this, the best serial that is being printed in America, will be in the January Red Book Magazine, on the news-stands December 23rd.